The Epic of Sounds.

An Interpretation of Wagner's Nibelungen Ring.

Freda Winworth.

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The Epic of Sounds.

FOURTH THOUSAND.

The Epic of Sounds.

AN ELEMENTARY INTERPRETATION

OF

Wagner's Nibelungen Ring.

BY

FREDA WINWORTH.

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TO

Herrn Siegfried Wagner

THIS LITTLE WORK

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

(*with the gracious consent of Frau Cosima Wagner*).

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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

For being enabled to issue a second edition of my little work so soon after its first publication, —and at a moment when we are looking forward with pleasurable anticipation to a series of uncurtailed performances of the "Ring" at Covent Garden,—I feel that I am principally indebted to the kindly interest taken in it by many friends, and to the generous welcome accorded to it by my lenient reviewers in the Press. To one and all I beg to tender my respectful thanks.

London, *March* 1898.

"*Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that sings.*"

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

* * * *

"*O glad, exulting, culminating song.*"

WALT WHITMAN.

* * * *

πολύφλοισβον.

PREFACE.

This little work I venture to offer to those who may desire to have the story of the "Ring" laid before them in a simple and, as I hope, straightforward manner. Commenced in the autumn of 1895, with the idea of bringing it out prior to the Bayreuth festival of the summer of 1896,—which was held in honour of the twentieth anniversary of the first performance of the "Ring," under Wagner's own direction,—its production was delayed through travelling arrangements.

In these days, when so much literature on Wagner and his creations already exists, the appearance of another work on the subject, and especially of so elementary a treatment of it as is contained in this book, might seem almost unwarranted. But my excuse for entering on a

field, which has already been so widely explored in so many different directions, and by persons of such various nationalities, is, that, so far as I have yet seen, none of these writers has kept near enough to the outskirts of this vast territory, to lend a helping hand to the new-comers, who may also desire to investigate its marvels and mysteries. For I think that the most fervent Wagner-lovers will not deny that appreciation of the master is an art, and one which demands a certain amount of careful study. Not only from my own experience, but also from conversations with many English and Americans, who had witnessed the Wagner representations at Bayreuth and Munich, I found that disappointment and a lack of appreciation were often evinced by those who had attended these performances without any previous preparation, and who had consequently come away with but a confused idea of what they had seen and heard. And this is, perhaps, more frequently the case with regard to the "Nibelungen Ring,"

than to any of the master's works; for, in this drama, the plot is so involved, that, at a first hearing, it is almost impossible to grasp it in its entirety, even with the help of text and score,—of both of which a preliminary study is almost essential to an intelligent and appreciative enjoyment of the whole.

Even so recently as last December, in a review, which appeared in one of the leading London daily papers, of a fresh work on Wagner, the reviewer intimated that there was still room for a book, intended for the general reader, which should relate the stories of the Wagner dramas in narrative form, "using only the dialogue and scenic descriptions of Wagner," and treating the matter "as a poetical whole." This statement seemed to coincide with my own experience, and these words of the reviewer describe, almost exactly, the object which I had in view, and the manner in which I have tried to carry it out, in relating the story of the "Ring." In the narra-

tive, I have kept as closely as possible to the Wagnerian conception throughout, and have endeavoured to give a plain and impartial account of the whole, with the object of helping the reader to such a clear and unprejudiced comprehension of the drama, as shall enable him to form his own judgment, after witnessing an unabridged performance of it on the stage.

It has also been my aim to avoid, as far as possible, any expression of personal opinion; and I have no wish to join in the fierce controversy, which still rages, both in England and abroad, round the Wagnerian drama. It is true, that when, in the October number of *Cosmopolis* (1896), I read the confession of Professor Max Müller, that, though he had "passed through a long school," he "could never learn to enjoy Wagner except now and then in one of his lucid intervals," I had the courage to feel surprise, tempered, of course, with the deference due to so distinguished and universally gifted a man.

I then, however, became more convinced than ever, that such enjoyment is quite a matter of temperament, or even of habit; for, to quote the Right Hon. gentleman again, "there is habit in music."

When we have "grown into, or grown up to" Wagner, perhaps we shall not experience that sense of fatigue, after seeing one of his dramas, of which so many people complain. In any case, surely every kind of amusement brings with it a certain amount of fatigue, which is generally in proportion to the duration of the enjoyment. But if we can hear Wagner under the conditions which he himself has prescribed;—that is to say, in a theatre which, during the performance, is completely darkened, save for the stage; in which, also, the distracting movements of the orchestra do not come between audience and actors; and where, between each act, an hour is allowed for rest and refreshment in the open air;—then the strain on the nerves, and the consequent amount

of fatigue, will necessarily be minimised. And is not every pleasure, which really deserves the name, worth some amount of trouble on our part, to acquire it; and, as regards its extent, in direct proportion to the apprehension of it, gained by that trouble? At all events, it seems a matter of necessity, that the judgment which we only inwardly form, and a matter of fairness, that the judgment which we outwardly pronounce, should be in that proportion. I have not unfrequently met with people, even "musical people," who "don't like Wagner," and who, when asked the cause of their dislike, have been forced to admit that they had had no adequate opportunity of judging him for themselves. I knew one lady, who was of this opinion before ever she had listened to a note of his music played by an orchestra; and her conclusions had been derived from what she had heard of his works performed on the piano.

Furthermore, in judging Wagner, we have to take into consideration the threefold character of

the master's creations. To understand Wagner, the musician, we must be acquainted with Wagner the poet, and Wagner the philosopher. Each is the complement of the other; and, though the musician may appeal more to some natures, and the poet to others, it is impossible to separate them, or fully to appreciate the one apart from the other. In order, therefore, to give the reader some slight guidance through the musical part of the drama, I have endeavoured to describe, in the text, the guiding themes, or what are generally known as "Motives." And through the great generosity and courtesy of Herrn B. Schott's Söhne, the publishers of the "Ring" at Mainz, I have been enabled to add, at the end of the volume, a fairly full selection of the leading motives themselves.

The analysis, which precedes the narrative, is intended as a sketch of the larger outlines of the whole drama. It may, perhaps, seem to contain an unnecessary amount of repetition; but this is

almost unavoidable in the endeavour to make clear the general plot, and the various relations and significances of persons and things, before entering on a more detailed account, the greater complexity of which might, without some kind of analytical introduction, prove rather confusing to the reader.

I hope, therefore, that this little work, in spite of all its faults, may become useful to those who are not yet acquainted with the great work of the great master, and assist them to enjoy, or, at least, to judge fairly and comprehensively, the living representation of the whole, or any part, of the "Ring," at which they may happen to be present.

Last, but very far removed from the least, of pleasant duties, it remains to me to tender respectful thanks to those who have so kindly contributed to the ease of my task: first, to Frau Cosima Wagner, of Bayreuth, for her gracious permission to tell the story: then, once more, to

Herrn B. Schott's Söhne, of Mainz, for their consent to reproduce, from the piano score, the notation of the leading motives: to the librarians of the *Staatsbibliothek* at Munich, and of the *Bibliothèque Nationale* at Paris, for placing the literature of the subject at my disposal: and to M. Wekerlin, the chief librarian of the *Conservatoire de Musique* in Paris, for allowing me to consult the orchestra score.

LONDON, *May* 1897.

The Main Idea of the Nibelungen Ring.

The contrast of the two Powers which rule the world;—the Power of Love and the Power of Gold.

Analytical Introduction.

THE RACES.

Wagner supposes the primitive existence of four distinct Races, inhabiting the world, viz.,

THE GODS;
THE GIANTS;
THE NIBELUNGEN, OR DWARFS;
THE RHINE-DAUGHTERS.

And at a later stage (by subsequent creation) of two other Races, viz.,

THE WALKÜREN;
THE HEROES AND HEROINES.

THE CHARACTERS OF THESE RACES.

1. The Gods

Are the noblest and highest race.

2. The Giants

Have strength,
But lack cunning.
They hate what is pure and noble,
And are hostile towards the gods.

3. The Nibelungen, or Dwarfs

Are very cunning.
They hate what is pure and noble,
And are bitterly hostile towards the gods.

{Their work is to fashion into shape the gold, which they find in the bowels of the earth.}

4. The Rhine-daughters

Are of a joyous and guileless nature,
Incapable of entertaining suspicion or hatred.
But they are susceptible to sorrow,
And desirous of annulling the power of evil.

5. The Walküren

Are warlike, brave, and compassionate.

6. The Heroes and Heroines

Are of two classes.

a. Those, who are of directly divine origin,
Are noble, pure, and brave.

b. Those, who are of directly human origin,
Exhibit the mixed qualities of ordinary human nature.

THE PLACES ORIGINALLY ASSIGNED TO THE PRIMITIVE RACES.

On the HEIGHTS dwell the Gods.
On the EARTH'S SURFACE dwell the Giants.

In the GROUND UNDER THE WATERS dwell the Nibelungen.
In the WATERS OF THE RHINE dwell the Rhine-daughters.

THE PLACES ASSIGNED TO THE LATER RACES.

WALHALL is inhabited by the Walküren.
THE EARTH is inhabited by the Heroes and Heroines.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Gods.

WOTAN, the first of the gods.
LOGE, the god of Fire.
DONNER, the god of Thunder.
FROH, the god of Joy.

Goddesses.

FRICKA, the goddess of Marriage.
FREIA, the goddess of Love.
ERDA, the goddess of the Earth.

Heroes.

SIEGMUND, } of divine origin.
SIEGFRIED, }
GUNTHER, } of mortal origin.
HUNDING, }

Heroines.

SIEGLINDE, of divine origin.
GUTRUNE, of mortal origin.

The Walküren.

BRÜNNHILDE, } Leading parts.
WALTRAUTE, }
GERHILDE, } The Chorus.
ORTLINDE, }
SCHWERTLEITE, }
HELMWIGE, }
SIEGRUNE, }
GRIMGERDE, }
ROSSWEISSE, }
} of divine origin.

The Giants.

FAFNER.
FASOLT.

The Nibelungen.

- **Dwarfs.**
  - ALBERICH.
  - MIME.
  - A CHORUS OF DWARFS.
- HAGEN.

The Rhine-daughters.

- FLOSSHILDE.
- WOGLINDE.
- WELLGUNDE.

The Three Norns.

Chorus of Gunther's Vassals.

Gutrune's Attendants.

RELATIONSHIPS.

(*m.* = *marriage.* *i.* = *issue.*)

- **Wotan's Wives.**
  - FRICKA (his first and *lawful* wife).
  - ERDA.
  - A MORTAL WOMAN.
- **Wotan's Children.**
  - BRÜNNHILDE (BY ERDA).
  - THE REST OF THE WALKÜREN.
  - THE WÄLSUNG TWINS (BY A MORTAL WOMAN).
- **Erda's Children.**
  - BRÜNNHILDE.
  - THE THREE NORNS.
- **The Wälsung Twins.**
  - SIEGMUND.
  - SIEGLINDE.
- **Sieglinde.**
  - HUNDING (her lawful husband).
  - SIEGMUND (her brother and lover).
- **Siegmund. Sieglinde.**
  - *i.* SIEGFRIED.
- **Siegfried.**
  - *m.* BRÜNNHILDE.
  - *m.* GUTRUNE.

Brünnhilde. { *m.* SIEGFRIED.
m. GUNTHER.

Brothers. { **Dwarfs.** { ALBERICH. / MIME.
Giants. { FAFNER. / FASOLT.

Brother and Sister. { GUNTHER. / GUTRUNE.

ALBERICH.
|
i. HAGEN.

Hagen is half-brother to Gunther and Gutrune.

THE ZONES OF ACTION.

WALHALL, the castle of the gods, on the mountain tops.
THE EARTH'S SURFACE, which includes
a. RIESENHEIM, the home of the giants.
b. THE BANKS OF THE RHINE.
c. THE GIBICHUNG CASTLE, by the Rhine.
d. BRÜNNHILDE'S ROCK.
e. THE PRIMEVAL FOREST.
THE WATERS OF THE RHINE.
NIBELHEIM, the underground home of the dwarfs.

IMPERSONATIONS.

STUPIDITY.	**Fafner.**
WEAKMINDEDNESS.	**Gunther.**

* * *

HATE.	**Hagen.**

TREACHERY.	Alberich, Mime, and Hagen.
DECEIT.	Mime and Hagen.
CUNNING.	Alberich, Mime, and Hagen.
CRUELTY.	Alberich.
INTRIGUE.	Loge.
COWARDICE.	Mime.
INSTABILITY.	Siegfried.

* * *

FEAR.	Wotan.
ANGER.	Wotan and Brünnhilde.
ANXIETY.	Wotan.
DESIRE.	Gutrune.

* * *

AMBITION.	Wotan, Siegfried, and Alberich.
POWER.	Wotan and Alberich.
STRENGTH.	Siegfried.
COURAGE.	Siegfried and Alberich.
JUSTICE.	Wotan.

* * *

YOUTH.	Freia.
JOY.	Froh.

* * *

CONFIDENCE.	Brünnhilde and Gunther.
ARTLESSNESS.	The Rhine-daughters.

* * *

SORROW.	Brünnhilde, Siegmund, and Sieglinde.
DESPAIR.	Wotan.
TENDERNESS.	Wotan.
CALM.	Wotan.
RESIGNATION.	Wotan.

* * *

WISDOM.	Erda and Brünnhilde.
FORESIGHT.	Erda and Brünnhilde.

* * *

Love.	Brünnhilde, Siegmund, and Sieglinde.
Compassion.	Brünnhilde.
Self-Sacrifice.	Brünnhilde.

ANIMALS.

The Horse (Grane).
The Birds.
(*a*) The Singing Bird.
(*b*) The Ravens.
The Dragon.
The Toad.
The Bear.

THE ELEMENTS AND THEIR IMPERSONATIONS.

Light.	Freia.
Darkness.	The Nibelungen.
Earth.	Erda.
Air (Storm)	Donner. The Walküren.
Fire.	Loge.
Water.	The Rhine-daughters.
Metals. (*a*) Gold.	The Ring and the Nibelungen Treasure.
Metals. (*b*) Steel.	The Sword.

SYMBOLS.

Ring, the Symbol of Power.
Tarnhelm, the Symbol of Deceit.
Sword, the Symbol of Strength.
Spear, the Symbol of Wotan's Authority.
Draught of Oblivion, the Symbol of Instability.
Rope of the Norns, the Symbol of The Thread of Destiny.

MAGIC.

THE RING

Endows its owner with supernatural strength, and ensures the obedience of others to his commands.

THE TARNHELM

Enables its owner to become invisible, or to assume any form he pleases.

THE SWORD

In Siegmund's hands owes its magic power to Wotan, and is deprived of that power by the god.

THE GOLDEN APPLES

Grow in Freia's garden, and are the means of preserving eternal youth to all who partake of them.

THE DRAUGHT OF OBLIVION

Effaces all remembrance of past events.

THE DRAUGHT OF MEMORY

Effaces all effects of the Draught of Oblivion.

THE DRAGON'S BLOOD

Enables Siegfried to understand the language of the birds.

THE ETHICAL EXEGESIS OF THE NIBELUNGEN RING.

A.

THE GENERAL LESSONS AND THEIR ALLOTMENT TO INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERS.

Cunning.

The contemptibility of cunning; exemplified by **Alberich, Hagen, and Mime.**

The likelihood that cunning will overreach and betray itself; exemplified by **Alberich, Hagen, and Mime.**

Avarice.

The incompatibility of the lust of gain with true pleasure; exemplified by **Alberich.**

Cowardice.

The contemptibility of cowardice; exemplified by **Mime.**

Courage.

Courage not always inconsistent with the pursuance of evil; exemplified by **Alberich.**

Ambition.

The incompatibility of the desire for fame with love; exemplified by **Siegfried.**

Power.

The temptation to become tyrannical, which the possession of power offers; exemplified by **Alberich.**

Fear engendered by the lust of power; exemplified by **Wotan.**

The lust of power is its own perdition; exemplified by **Wotan, Hagen, and Mime.**

The incompatibility of the lust of power with love; exemplified by **Alberich, Fafner, and Wotan.**

The incompatibility of the lust of power with true pleasure; exemplified by **Alberich and Wotan.**

Disobedience.

The inevitable punishment of filial disobedience; exemplified by **Brünnhilde.**

Suffering.

The egoism and blindness of human love, when untried by suffering; exemplified by **Brünnhilde.**

Love sometimes engendered by suffering in common; exemplified by **Siegmund and Sieglinde.**

The purification of love through suffering; exemplified by **Brünnhilde.**

Knowledge and wisdom only acquired through sorrow and suffering; exemplified by **Brünnhilde.**

The nature of a god. Even gods are bound by their own laws; exemplified by **Wotan.**

The conflict of duty and tenderness in the parental heart of a god; exemplified by **Wotan.**

Innocent pleasure. The possibility of an innocent enjoyment of gold; exemplified by the **Rhine-daughters.**

Nobility. A pure and noble nature's incapacity of suspecting deceit and untruth in others; exemplified by **Brünnhilde.**

Humanity. Compassion for the sorrows of others is the essence of true humanity; exemplified by **Brünnhilde.**

Happiness. True happiness only attained by the complete and voluntary sacrifice of self, for the good of others; exemplified by **Brünnhilde.**

* * *

B.

The Individual Characters
in
Their Illustrative Development.

Wotan.

The Impersonation of the **Human Will.**

The type of the highest humanity, where, on its volitional side, it merges into the divine.

Though the chief of the gods, he has the usual mythical limitations, his perfection (if the word may be used) being variable, and his power not absolute.

In early youth, his first pleasures are those of love:
But ambition soon replaces love in his breast.
He seeks, therefore, by all possible means, to increase his power;
And, by treaties or by force, subjects all other powers to his will.
He employs underhand means (Loge) to further his ends;
And thus draws upon himself the inevitable curse of evil.
The fear of losing ill-gotten power oppresses him;
And the hatred of hostile forces threatens him and his race with destruction.
He listens, however, to Nature's warnings;
And thus escapes all immediate danger.
He gains wisdom and foresight by communing with Nature;
And from her he receives a power, with which to fight evil forces:
But she cannot stop, or change for him, the course of destiny.

In his fear of annihilation, he resorts to other means.
He sets established custom at defiance;
And endeavours to escape from the laws, with which he hoped to bind others:
But circumstances prove to be stronger than his will;
And in sorrow and anger, he has to submit to the inevitable.
Heart-broken and weary, he renounces his schemes of ambition,
As he realises the futility of fighting against fate.
Resignation gradually takes the place of anger and despair in his bosom.
He becomes merely a passive spectator of events.
Only once more does he oppose his will to that of destiny:
But the last vestige of his power is destroyed.
His only desire then is for the end;
And calmly and submissively he waits the approach of his doom, and the final extinction of his glory.

Loge.

The impersonation of **Intrigue.**
His nature is roving and restless.
He delights in the discomfiture of others;
And is possessed of a ready and sarcastic wit.
His cunning makes him indispensable to the higher powers;
And his advice and aid are invaluable to Wotan.
His cleverness often gets himself and others out of a difficulty:
But, in assisting them, he himself contrives to escape from all responsibility.
He sees through the folly of others:
But he aids and abets them therein, as far as the doing so serves his own ends.

Donner.

The god of **Thunder.**
His character is blustering and violent.
Master of the atmosphere, he clears away the storm clouds;
And provides a beautiful entrance to the gods' dwelling.

Froh.

The God of **Joy.**
He endeavours to retain the presence of Freia, the Goddess of Love;
And, of all the gods, he is the most joyful at her return.

Fricka.

The representative of **Moral Law and Order.**
She protects those who suffer by a breach of this law.
Her intelligence grasps only long-established facts and rules,
And she fails to understand the aims of a god (Wotan), who is planning the creation of a new race.
She has no pity for those who suffer through their own or another's faults.
Stern and inexorable, she demands that justice shall be done.
By virtue of existing laws she triumphs over Wotan's humanity;
And makes good her right in the eyes of gods and men.

Freia.

The Goddess of **Love and Youth.**
She possesses the power of imparting immortality.
She is sacrificed to others' ambition, and their desire for power:
But her presence is indispensable to the gods.
The price of her redemption is untold wealth, and the symbol of omnipotence.

Erda.

The Impersonation of the **Earth.**
All the secrets of Nature and Destiny are known to her:
But she has no power to change either the one or the other.
Her voice is only heard as a warning against evil.
She is vanquished by the Will of Wotan, to whom she reveals herself;
And to him she imparts knowledge and wisdom.
She furnishes him with the means, by which to combat hostile forces:
But her wisdom and foresight vanish before the power of Wotan's Will;
And at his bidding she sinks again into eternal sleep.

The Wälsung Twins.

Two Beings predestined for each other by **Fate.**
Their common origin signifies a close affinity of soul;
And each forms the complement of the other.
They belong to a higher sphere than their surroundings;
And, by virtue of their divine origin, have a different nature from their fellow-mortals.
This difference causes them to be misunderstood and persecuted;
And, separated, each leads a life of spiritual and moral isolation.
Brought together by circumstances, a mutual sympathy is inevitable;
And in mutual love they seek a refuge from affliction and sorrow:
But, in so doing, they break the laws of human morality;
And thus draw upon themselves a universal condemnation.

The sympathy of one compassionate heart (Brünnhilde's)
cannot protect them;
And the punishment of their offence is separation and
death.

Siegfried.

The Type of a **Free Hero.**
The offspring of a symbolic union, and born in the
forest,
He is a true child of Nature.
He grows up in the depths of the primeval forest,
Far from the world, and in ignorance of its ways.
His companions and playmates are the birds and beasts
of the wood;
His only human society, a miserable little dwarf (Mime),
Whom his noble nature instinctively distrusts and
dislikes.
Alone, and on his own merits, he makes his way in
the world,
Clearing all obstacles by his undaunted fearlessness.
He becomes master of untold wealth;
And wins the love of the noblest woman in the world
(Brünnhilde).
But he is ignorant of the value of these things;
And sacrifices a pure love to his liking for change, and
desire for fame.
He becomes the accomplice of a plot against himself.
He learns from bad companions the use of deceit.
He refuses to listen to the warnings of Nature;
And his blindness to danger causes his ruin:
But his last moments reveal again the higher side of
his character.

Gunther.

The Personification of **Moral Weakness.**
The last representative of an ancient race of heroes.

His character is proud and self-contained;
And his chief desire, to increase his possessions:
But, being weak and irresolute, he is easily led by evil influence;
And succumbs to the temptation of wrong-doing, in order to satisfy his own desires.
He also leads astray the man who becomes his friend (Siegfried);
And obtains, through him, the longed-for prize (Brünnhilde).
He is covered with shame and confusion, by the result of his own action:
But is too weak-minded to realise the extent of his folly.
He allows the consequences of their common wrong-doing to fall on his friend alone;
And joins in a plot to ruin the man (Siegfried), to whom he swore fidelity.
Too late, he makes a feeble effort to avert the fatal blow;
And even endeavours to thwart the power of evil:
But this power again proves too strong for him;
And he falls by the same hand (Hagen's), as that which slays his friend, and of which he himself had been the tool.

Hunding.

The type of a rough, hard, though brave, **Hero.**
His character is harsh and gloomy,
His only law that of might.
His rule is loveless and tyrannical;
His hatred of an enemy, implacable.
He respects, however, the rules of hospitality:
But knows no mercy, and avenges a wrong done to him with death.
He is protected by the laws of justice;
And is thereby enabled to triumph over, and revenge himself on, his rival (Siegmund).

Gutrune.

A type of **Feminine Frailty.**

She is weak, amiable, and easily led.
More ambitious than her brother (Gunther),
She desires Siegfried for his famous reputation.
She falls a victim to the wiles of evil;
And consents to become the instrument of a dark plot,
Of which, however, she is unable to fathom the depth.
She voluntarily sacrifices another woman's happiness to her own desires;
And is even jealous of the rival (Brünnhilde), over whom she has thus triumphed.
In the short period of happiness she enjoys, she seems to forget her guilt:
But she fears and dislikes the woman, whom she has betrayed: (for "*humani generis est odisse quem laeseris*").
Only when the consequences of evil-doing are irrevocable, does she realise the effects of her own action.
In vain she curses the author (Hagen) of so much misery;
And bitterly regrets her own deeds.
Her weak individuality finally vanishes before the grandeur of her rival's character.

The Walküren.

The Embodiment of **Heroic Strength.**

Their nature is wild, free, and joyous as the elements, through which they ride.
Their mission is, to war against the power of evil;
To protect noble and brave heroes;
And to bring them, after death, to the halls of Walhall.
But the warlike element of their nature excludes all humaner feelings;
And, except Brünnhilde, they all perish under the curse, from which love alone can save.

* * *

N.B.—*Wal*=Field of Battle.
Küren=to chose.
The Walküren are those, who bring to Walhall the heroes chosen by Wotan, after they have been slain on the battlefield.

* * *

Brünnhilde.

The Impersonation of **Love.**

The type of the highest humanity, where, on its emotional side, it merges into the divine.

See owes her being to a close union of the Human Will with Nature.

From her father (Wotan), she inherits courage and strength;

From her mother (Erda), wisdom and foresight.

She becomes, as it were, the active expression of her father's Will:

But a schism in that Will itself causes the first conflict in her being.

The humane side of her nature gains the day;

And compassion for the sorrow of others ends the conflict in her breast.

Becoming affected thus, she also unconsciously becomes free,

And so escapes the danger of annihilation which threatens the gods.

But she cannot avoid the inevitable consequences of the change in her nature.

She has escaped from the laws of the gods:

But she must submit to the rule of mortal love.

Her maiden purity at first shrinks from the contact of human passion;

Till love finally conquers all other conflicting elements of her nature.

But her perfect confidence and affection are ruthlessly betrayed.
Her noble simplicity and innocence make her a victim to evil forces.
Her ignorance of evil renders her incapable of divining the real cause of her misfortunes:
And she herself unwittingly becomes the tool of diabolical machinations.
Only after long anguish and despair does she become enlightened as to their cause.
With this knowledge the divine side of her nature again shines forth with added glory.
The love in her heart triumphs over care and sorrow;
And becomes a divine compassion for suffering humanity;
And, by the voluntary sacrifice of self, she redeems the world from the curse of sin.

Waltraute.

One of the **Walküren.**
She ranks next to Brünnhilde in courage:
But does not understand the human side of her sister's character.
She endeavours, nevertheless, at the risk of punishment, to save the gods from destruction.
But her reasoning and entreaties are in vain, against the power of love.
Her errand fails, and she returns, to perish in the conflagration of Walhall.

Fafner.

A Type of **Physical Strength and Moral Sloth.**
He is slow-witted and heavy, but desirous of possessing wealth;
And he manages to outwit the powers who have subjected him to their will.
He prefers gold to the pleasures of love:

But he makes no use of the gold he acquires;
And is too stupid to avail himself of the power (of the Ring and Tarnhelm) within his reach.
The only use he makes of the power of the Tarnhelm
Is, to assume an animal form;
And thus to sleep, and to guard in his den the treasure he possesses.
He is deaf to all warnings, and confident in his own strength;
And the possession of the Ring is the cause of his death.

Fasolt.

The gentler-natured of the two giants.
He is less avaricious than his brother (Fafner);
And more susceptible to the charms of Freia;
And unwilling to sacrifice her, for gold and power.
His feebler nature has to yield to that of his brother;
And he is the first victim of the curse attached to the Ring.

Alberich.

The Personification of **Evil**.
He is resolute, defiant, and undaunted in his pursuit of it.
His character combines the love of sensual pleasure with an insatiable lust of gain, and desire for power:
But he is willing to sacrifice even pleasure to ambition;
And brings into a world of love and innocence, the curse of sin and sorrow.
The acquisition of power magnifies his petty cruelty into larger tyranny;
And his fellow-beings become his slaves.
His chief aim is, to destroy all that is good, pure, and noble.
He accumulates wealth for that purpose.

He detects, and uses, bad qualities in others for his own ends.
He is defeated, however, by a cunning greater than his own:
But he resolves to revenge himself at all costs;
And he lets no opportunity escape of increasing the power of evil.
Eventually he effects the ruin of all living beings,
Till the power of a divine love releases the world from his influence.

Mime.

The Personification of **Cunning.**
He is avaricious and treacherous:
But cowardly in the extreme.
His weakness makes him a victim to tyranny:
But events free him from his brother's (Alberich's) rule.
For his own selfish purpose, he does an act of benevolence;
And, in the hope of future reward, brings up a child (Siegfried) whom he hates.
He is careful to keep the child ignorant of its origin,
Till forced to reveal the truth.
Being too weak to obtain what he desires by force,
He resorts to underhand means, and deception.
He defeats his own ends, however;
And meets with the fate, which he had intended for another.

Hagen.

The Personification of **Hate.**
The offspring of a union, caused by the love of gold, on the one hand, and by the desire for vengeance, on the other.
He is brought up by his father (Alberich) for revenge;
And has inherited, from him, an intense hatred of all that is good.

His nature is gloomy, morose, and cold;
And all his energy is concentrated on regaining the symbol of power (The Ring).
He insinuates himself into the confidence of others;
And makes their passions and desires serve his own aim.
He sacrifices mercilessly the happiness of all, whom he uses as his tools;
And does not spare even life, when it hinders the achievement of his plans.
He is unable to frustrate the power of love, however;
And meets with an untimely end, in the waters of the Rhine.

The Rhine-daughters.

The Personification of the **Waters of the Rhine.**
They are the original guardians of the Gold.
Being a part of Nature herself, their character is joyous and guileless;
And they rejoice in the beauty of the Gold, heedless of its power.
They innocently reveal the secret of the Gold;
And then are unable to protect it from the power of evil (Alberich).
Their efforts to regain the Gold, are all of no avail,
Till a power greater than that of Nature (Brünnhilde) restores it to them;
And its brilliancy again brightens the waters, and rejoices their hearts.
They punish with death him (Hagen), who would rob them of it a second time.

* * *

The Gold.

a. The Rhine Gold.

In its natural state, it is guarded by the waters of the Rhine;

And is powerless and harmless:
But, transferred from its natural element, its form and properties are changed;
And in the hands of evil, it becomes, when made into a Ring by Alberich (*v.* Ring, below), a powerful force.
Its presence chases away that of love:
But confers omnipotence on its possessor;
And enables him to obtain all that he desires.

b. THE TREASURE OF THE NIBELUNGEN.

The Gold hidden in the depths of the earth.
It becomes the property of the master of the Rhine-gold.
It is stored by Alberich, to serve him in his evil plans.
It is transferred from his possession into Wotan's;
And forms a part of Freia's ransom.
It is hoarded and watched by Fafner, in his den.
For Siegfried it has no value, and is left lying idle, and useless.

The Ring.

The Symbol of **Omnipotence.**
Made by Alberich from the Gold in the Rhine (*v.* p. xli).
It endows its possessor with supernatural strength;
And with supreme power over his fellows.
It brings into his hands all riches of the earth;
And subjects all other forces to his will.
It owes its existence to the renunciation of love;
And its formation is the work of an evil hand.
Its maker (Alberich) uses it to tyrannise over others;
And hopes, by means of it, to destroy all existing purity, nobility, and goodness.
Acquired by him through a curse, it leaves his hands weighted with a double malediction.
Thenceforward it is the cause of all evil and misery in the world.

It clouds with sorrow, fear, and discord the sunny heights.
The shadow of its curse lies over the gods and Walhall;
And finally causes their total extinction.
It forms the object of plots, intrigues, and combats on the earth.
Jealousy, anxiety, and a desire to possess it reign in all hearts, that know of its existence;
And each one, in turn, falls a victim to its curse.
In the hands of youthful purity and innocence (Siegfried and Brünnhilde) it becomes a love-token:
But even then the curse still clings to it;
And around its master (Siegfried) dark plots thicken.
It is the cause of bitter shame and sorrow, to even the noblest of its possessors (Brünnhilde);
And effects the ruin and death of him (Siegfried) for whom, as a symbol of power, it has no value.
It is only purified from the curse by the power of a pure love;
And its baneful influence ceases, when it is again restored to its native element.

The Tarnhelm.

The Symbol of Deceit.
It enables its owner to become invisible;
Or to assume any form he pleases.
It is the product of a sly and treacherous nature.
Its maker (Mime) is unable to estimate its full value;
In Alberich's hands, however, it becomes a powerful factor for evil.
Through it, he is entrapped by the cunning Loge.
Fafner's only use of it is, to assume the form of an animal.
To the youthful Siegfried its power is unknown.
He learns the use of it from an evil source (Hagen);
And, by means of it, he deceives and betrays Brünnhilde.

The Sword.

A Symbol of **Strength.**

It is destined by divine will, in the first instance, for the hero of misfortune (Siegmund).
He comes into possession of it by the aid of love (Sieglinde):
But its power is annulled by that of justice (Wotan);
And it is shattered by the symbol of the law.
It is not, however, wholly destroyed;
And its fragments are inherited by the son (Siegfried) of its original possessor.
Cowardice and cunning can do nothing with these fragments:
But heroic courage transforms them again into a powerful weapon.
This weapon lays low sloth and cowardice;
And its master becomes possessed of wealth and the symbol of omnipotence.
The sceptre of the law finally breaks on its sharp edge.
It cuts through the iron shell of the Walküre's warlike nature,
Thus disclosing to Siegfried the womanly grace beneath.
To the free hero, it is of more value than wealth or power;
And he offers its services to his friend (Gunther).
After his fall, Siegfried no longer makes any use of it.

* * *

N.B.—In the Drama the sword is called "Nothung." It receives this name, which signifies the sword of "distress," from Siegmund, because he finds it in the hour of his greatest need.

* * *

The Spear.

The Symbol of Wotan's **Authority.**

By means of it, the god subjects the inferior races to his will.
It is interposed, to prevent strife between the gods and the giants.
It protects and enforces the laws of the gods;
And inflicts punishment on those who infringe those laws.
It evokes the flames which protect Brünnhilde's sleep;
And bars the entrance to that enchanted circle, for all who fear its power.
Its authority is shattered by the strength of youth and love;
And the broken fragments are all that remain to Wotan of his power.

* * *

Walhall.

The Home of the Gods.
A symbol of power, whose price is the loss of love and youth.
Eventually, however, it is paid for with the Rhine Gold;
And thus comes under the curse of evil:
But the influence of this curse is not immediately felt.
Walhall becomes the stronghold of the gods;
And the resting-place of chosen heroes, after their death.
But, with the banishment from its halls of its noblest inhabitant (Brünnhilde),
Sorrow and care fall upon those who remain;
And the shadow of the curse darkens its halls.
Slowly the "old order changeth, yielding place to new,"
And Walhall, with its Gods, its Heroes and its Walküren, disappears.
Its glory is consumed by the fire of Love.

* * *

N.B.—"Walhall" signifies the hall of the heroes slain in battle.
Wal=Battlefield.

NOTE TO THE READER.

For the purpose of facilitating the reader's and spectator's task, INDENTS *have been made here and there at the side of the text, to indicate the* FIRST ENTRANCE, *or the* REAPPEARANCE, OF PERSONS *on the scene; also where the* FIRST MENTION IS MADE OF ANY IMPORTANT SYMBOL, *—such as the Ring,—or in the case of such a* SYMBOL BEING CALLED INTO ACTIVE USE *in the drama.*

The NAMES OF PERSONS AND THINGS, *contained in these indents, are, for the most part, further emphasised* IN THE TEXT *by the use of* **Old English type.** *The same type is sometimes employed to draw attention to the* APPEARANCE OR MENTION OF A PERSON OR THING, *where no indent occurs.*

The HEADINGS which appear in the text have been introduced in order to indicate briefly the CHIEF SCENES AND INCIDENTS *of the drama, with the object of rendering the general scheme*

as clear and comprehensible as possible, and of preparing the spectator for what he is to see next.

The names of MOTIVES, *WHERE THEY FIRST* OCCUR, *appear in* **Old English type** *in the text:* THEIR RECURRENCE *is shown by their names appearing in* SMALL CAPITALS; *and each motive is separately named and numbered, both in the text and on the pages* (159–176) *of music, which follow the narrative. The numbers of the motives in the text of course correspond with those of the music at the end; and the names of the motives are, for the most part, those that have been generally assigned to them, though in some cases I have adopted for them other names, which seem to me to be more appropriate.*

I am not altogether without hope, that the arrangement of the types, the general plan and the size of this volume may render it a handy, portable guide, not only to the reader at home, but also to the spectator of a performance in the theatre.

The Main Ideas of the Rheingold.

Base love of Gold destroys golden Love, and leads

Along a path of Cunning to a hunt after overrated Power.

The Rheingold.

* * *

The Overture.

In this wonderful beginning of, perhaps, the most powerful of Richard Wagner's creations, this grand Tetralogy, which contains the tragedy of human existence, we are first of all introduced to the **Elements,** in their primeval purity.

Out of the darkness and silence, which reign over all, as before the creation of a world, comes, from the double-basses, the beginning of the Overture, with a deep, prolonged note, that represents the unbroken peace of Nature in a primeval state, ere evil or tragic elements of any sort have found their way in to mar that peace.

Gradually the sounds rise and swell, and flow into a rhythmic movement, like the full tide of some great water. Out of this movement rises, on the

flutes and bassoons, the first definite melody in the drama, a soft, flowing, evolutionary melody, which rises and falls like the waves, and which may be considered as the *Motive* of the **Primeval Element** (1).

SCENE I.

* * *

THE RHINE-DAUGHTERS AT PLAY.

Now the curtain is lifted, and the scene before us represents the **bottom of the Rhine,** in dusky twilight. The water, however, only comes to within about five feet from the ground, and is then replaced beneath by a sort of mist, through which the rugged forms of rocks are visible. These rocks, as well as the river's bottom, are full of dark clefts and openings. A **rock** in the centre towers high above the rest, so that its summit almost reaches the surface of the water. Around this summit swims one of the **Rhine-daughters.** Her clear song rises above the

music of the orchestra, like the first ray of light piercing the darkness.

These Daughters of the Rhine are themselves part of the clear, changing element; and their song, as representing the voice of Nature, resembles the fluctuating sounds of the waves, rather than definite words; and forms the *Motive* of the **Rhine-daughters** (2).

Alberich. Their innocent, lively play, as they chase each other round the summit of the rock, is accompanied by a quick light movement in the orchestra. Soon, however, darker tones introduce into these pure harmonies the tragic element; and the beginning of **Evil** appears, in the person of the dwarf **Alberich**, who comes up from his dark home under the waters, and, with sensual desires, watches the play of the three maidens. He calls to them, and then tries to join in their game, in order to catch one of them. With laughter and scorn they entice him, first by approaching him, and then as quickly escaping again. His lamentations at their treatment of him are accompanied by a series of chords, which might here be called the *Motive* of **Impotence** (3).

Alberich at length becomes furious; and, after

frantic, but futile, endeavours to climb up the rocks, he shakes his fist at the maidens. This action is accompanied by seven threatening chords, which form an expressive *Motive* of **Menace** (4).

THE EYE OF THE GOLD UNSEALED.

Suddenly, in the midst of his impotent rage, Alberich's attention is diverted from the Rhine-daughters to a magical, golden light, which sinks down through the water, while shining rays come from the top of the high rock in the centre of the stream. The trembling movement on the violins is like the shimmer of gold in quivering sunshine. And now, on the horns, resounds the *Motive* of the **Gold** (5); a ringing, triumphant fanfare, significant at once of its metallic nature, and of its power in the world. This motive is of very frequent occurrence throughout the drama.

The Rhine-daughters hail with delight the awakening of the Gold by the sun's first rays. Their cry of "Rhinegold, laughing delight," forms a second important *Motive* for the **Gold** (6), a sweeter motive than the first, and one which betokens its beauty, as a pure element, free from

all evil, and a source of only innocent pleasure to the Rhine-daughters, who guard it. These latter now swim joyously around the rocks, and invite Alberich, who stands speechlessly watching this spectacle, to come and revel with them in the golden glory.

The Ring.

By their heedless chatter, the maidens then reveal to the Nibelung the secret power of the Gold; namely, that he, who should shape the metal into a Ring, would win the world for himself. Here, on the oboes, the *Motive* of the **Ring** (7) descends and remounts the scale in thirds. This motive is one of great significance in the drama. Equally significant is the *Motive* of **Renunciation** (8), which accompanies, with tragic portent, the words of one of the Rhine-daughters, when she tells Alberich, that only he, who should curse the power, and renounce the pleasure, of Love, could gain the magic force, by which to transform the Gold into a Ring.

ALBERICH STEALS THE GOLD.

The Nibelung, to whom Love means only the satisfaction of sensual desires, willingly renounces

it, for the sake of a power, which would make him master of the whole world. By a frantic effort, he succeeds in clambering up the centre rock, and with a cry of "Thus do I curse Love," he seizes the **Gold**, which lies on the summit of the rock. He then rapidly descends with it, into one of the clefts at the bottom of the river. Darkness falls over the whole scene, and the joyous song of the Rhine maidens is changed into lamentations and cries for help, as they vainly pursue the thief. The *Motive* of the Gold (5) dies away in a sorrowful minor key, ending in the *Motive* of Renunciation (8).

Now a transformation takes place in the scenery. The waves gradually sink, and give place to clouds; these also disperse, and the tops of the mountains emerge from the vapours.

Here the second Scene begins.

SCENE II.

* * *

WALHALL, THE HOME OF THE GODS.

At first darkness reigns: but the growing light of daybreak reveals to us a majestic building on the mountains.

The Ring *Motive* (7), which recurs frequently during the change of scene, is now followed, on the brass instruments, by one somewhat similar to it, and also significant of power and dominion. This is the *Motive* of **Walhall** (9), the castle in which the gods are to dwell henceforth, and in which Wotan, their head, proposes to increase his strength and authority, as governor of the world. The Motive of Walhall forms also a motive for, and represents, the character of Wotan himself.

Wotan. Fricka. In the open space in the foreground **Wotan,** the first of the gods, and his wife, **Fricka,** are lying asleep. Between them and **Walhall,** flows the **Rhine.**

Fricka, on opening her eyes, perceives the castle, and calls to Wotan to awake from blissful dreams of power and glory.

To the majestic chords of the WALHALL *MOTIVE* (9), the god rises, and greets the castle, as the fulfilment of his dreams, and the perfect realisation of that which he has willed.

But Wotan, possessed by the same insatiable desire as Alberich for endless power and dominion, has also been willing to sacrifice Love, in order to become omnipotent. And now Fricka reminds him, that to the Giants who built the castle he has promised, as a reward of their labour, Freia, the fair goddess of Love.

The *MOTIVE* of **Wotan's Spear** (10), the symbol of the power, by which he rules the world, is introduced in this scene on the violoncellos and double-basses. This motive, as it descends the scale, seems to denote the action of bringing the spear's point down on to the ground, with an authoritative gesture.

Wotan has been advised to make this treaty with the Giants, by Loge, the cunning god of Fire. Now, however, to Fricka's reproaches, that he is indifferent to the delights of Love, and to the worth of woman, Wotan replies, that he

never earnestly contemplated the sacrifice in question, and that he relies on Loge's cunning to free him, and Freia also, from the treaty made with the Giants.

Freia. A hurried, descending movement on the violins constitutes the *Motive* of **Flight** (11), and announces **Freia's** approach. She comes running in terror towards Wotan and Fricka, and appeals to them for protection against the Giants, who are already coming to claim their reward. Their rough character and heavy tread is well expressed by the *Motive* of the **Giants** (12).

THE ARRIVAL OF THE GIANTS.

Fafner. Fasolt. In vain Wotan and the two goddesses look for the arrival of Loge, and of the Gods, Donner and Froh. The Giants **Fafner** and **Fasolt** enter, and demand from Wotan the reward of their work. On the god's refusal to give up Freia, they remind him indignantly, that his power over them has been attained by means of treaties only; these treaties have been sealed with Wotan's spear: to break them is to lose his power.

The Golden Apples.

Fasolt, the gentler-natured of the two Giants, wishes to have Freia for her own sake; but the more cunning Fafner tells his brother, that to deprive the gods of Freia's presence is also important, because of the **Golden Apples** which grow in her garden, and of which the gods partake every day, and thus preserve their immortality. If Freia is no longer there to tend these Apples, the gods will grow old and feeble, and pass away.

The *Motive* of the **Golden Apples** (13) resembles, in a sweeter key, the *Motive* of the Ring (7), and is likewise played on the horns. The Apples constitute the treasure of the gods, in which their power lies, just as the Ring constitutes Alberich's treasure.

Donner. Froh.

The Giants at length attempt to drag Freia away by force, when **Donner** and **Froh** arrive on the scene; and Donner, the Thunder-God, raises his hammer to strike the Giants.

Loge.

Wotan interposes his spear between the combatants, and, just at this juncture, **Loge** arrives. The music accompanying his entrance, as it runs up and down on the violoncellos, and flickers like flames, characterises

his quick, slippery cunning, his everlasting changeableness and restlessness, which are no more to be controlled, than the fire that is his element. In this part of the drama Loge represents the element of Intrigue.

To Wotan's question, why he did not come before, to suggest a way out of this difficulty, Loge gives an evasive answer. Being harder pressed by Wotan, he asks, how he shall find that which does not exist? This irritating reply provokes Donner and Froh to anger: but again Wotan intervenes, and demands from Loge a more decisive answer.

LOGE'S STORY OF HIS GREAT QUEST.

Then follows Loge's narration, which, for poetic beauty of language and music, is one of the most striking passages in the first part of the drama. Loge, in order to find a substitute for Freia, swept through all corners of the earth, but learned, that in the wide world nothing could take the place of Woman. Wherever there was life in earth, air, or water, no living thing would renounce Love. A sweet melody on the clarionets, oboes, and horns accompanies these words of Loge's,

and may be considered as the *Motive* of **Love** (14).

Loge further relates, that he found only one, who was willing to renounce Love. And then he tells his listeners of the Nibelung Alberich, and of how the latter stole the Gold from the Rhine.

Loge adds, that he promised the Rhine-daughters, that he would tell Wotan of their loss, and would ask him to restore the Gold to the Rhine. This angers Wotan. How shall he help others, when he himself is in trouble?

Meanwhile, Fafner has listened attentively to Loge's story, and learns from him the power of the Gold, in the form of a Ring. Fricka thinks it would make a beautiful ornament; and Loge adds, that the possession of it would ensure to her her husband's fidelity.

Wotan, whose mind is fixed on winning absolute power, asks Loge how it would be possible to get the Ring. Wotan cannot bring himself to curse Love, and, even if he would, it is now too late; as Alberich has already done so, and is in possession of the Ring. Loge then advises Wotan to steal it from Alberich, as the Nibelung himself stole it from the Rhine-daughters. But to the Giants, too, the possession of the Gold

seems more desirable than the possession of Freia: they are also willing to renounce Love, in the person of its Goddess, if Wotan will procure for them the Gold. As Wotan remonstrates, they seize Freia, and drag her off with them as a hostage, till the evening, when they will return, to see if the Gold is ready for them.

Loge watches them, as they depart for **Riesenheim** (the Giants' home), carrying Freia with them. Then, turning to his companions, Loge sarcastically enquires, "How fares it with the happy gods?" A sort of dark mist has sunk over the scene, which makes them all look pale and old; and a sorrowful motive, resembling somewhat that of the Ring, is heard on the wind instruments and violoncellos; it is the *Motive* of **Darkness** (15). Loge then explains to them the cause of this transformation. They have not partaken to-day of the Golden Apples of youth; the race of gods will die out, if Freia does not come back to them.

A GOD'S DESCENT TO THE DWARFS.

With sudden determination, Wotan resolves to take from Alberich the Gold, with which to buy

back eternal youth. He disappears with Loge, amid flames, into a cleft in the rock, in order to descend to **Nibelheim,** the underground home of the dwarfs.

The sulphurous vapour from the flames, which accompany the departure of the two gods, darkens into black clouds, and the scene seems to sink deep down into the earth.

SCENE III.

* * *

NIBELHEIM.

Alberich. Mime. THE third scene opens in **Nibelheim**, the home of the Nibelungen. We see before us a sort of subterranean vault, or cavern, surrounded by rock: in this rock are various dark openings. The light diffused over the scene is subdued and reddish.

The **Nibelungen** *MOTIVE* (16) consists of a rhythmic movement, the metallic sound of which resembles the regular fall of a hammer on the anvil. This motive represents the occupation of the Nibelungen as goldsmiths, who work into shape the gold, which they find in the earth.

The Tarnhelm. As this Nibelungen Motive resounds, **Alberich** emerges from one of the openings in the rock, dragging by the ear the dwarf, **Mime**, his brother. Only on Mime's saying, that the cap which he carries in his hand is ready for Alberich, does the latter release him.

Mime then produces the **Tarnhelm,** a cap of wonderful, magic power. Its possessor is enabled, by donning it, to make himself invisible, or to change immediately into any form he wishes. The *Motive* of the **Tarnhelm** (17), with its weird chords, that rise and fall on the horns, expresses well the dark, magic power of the cap, and the effect of that magic on the person who has invoked it.

ALBERICH SEIZES THE TARNHELM.

Mime has put all his cunning skill into this Tarnhelm, which Alberich, with special directions as to its manufacture, ordered him to make. But, though he suspects the hidden power in the cap, Mime has not been able to find out what that power is. However, he is not left long in ignorance. Alberich no sooner has it in his hands, than he tests its power at once, by making himself invisible to the astonished Mime, whom he unmercifully beats and pinches, and then leaves him howling on the ground.

Wotan. Loge. While Mime lies groaning, where Alberich has left him, **Wotan** and **Loge** enter. They learn from Mime the cause

of his misery, and of Alberich's unmerciful rule over his own brother, and over the whole Nibelung race. Loge comforts Mime with promises of help.

ALBERICH'S RULE IN NIBELHEIM.

Alberich now re-enters the scene, armed with a whip, and driving before him a crowd of **Nibelungen,** laden with gold, which they pile up into a heap, amid scolding and blows from their master.

The Ring. Alberich then draws from his finger the **Ring,** which he kisses, and holds up threateningly: at the sight of it, the terrified dwarfs hurry off into the rocks, uttering the most pitiful cries.

The *Motive* of the Ring (7) is followed here by dark, ominous chords on wind instruments and kettledrums, which form the *Motive* of **Alberich's Triumph** (18).

Alberich then perceives Wotan and Loge, and addresses them curtly with the words, "What do you seek here?" Wotan explains that rumours of Alberich's fame have reached them, and they have come out of curiosity. Alberich believes it

is jealousy which has brought them. Loge interposes, and asks Alberich if he does not remember his friend. But Alberich answers, that Loge is now a friend of the gods, and that he, therefore, no longer trusts his friendship. Alberich defies him and all of them. He shows the two gods the **Treasure,** explaining that what they see there is but a miserable little heap, compared with the dimensions it will soon attain; and that with this treasure he is going to make himself master of the whole world. The *Motive* of the **Treasure** (19), when it shall rise out of the ground, to work such evil on the earth, resounds on the double-basses and bassoons, and ascends the scale in sinister, threatening tones.

The gods, who "live, laugh, and love" on the heights, are the object of Alberich's bitterest hatred: they too shall come under his dominion. To the tragic *Motive* of Renunciation (8), Alberich declares that all living beings shall renounce Love, as he has done: like him, all shall be greedy for Gold, and all shall be its slaves. A demoniacal rage against all that is pure and noble possesses this son of darkness; and his warning to Wotan, to beware, is full of menace and scorn.

ALBERICH TRAPPED BY THE TARNHELM.

Wotan's anger is aroused by the insulting words of the Nibelung: but Loge speedily intervenes, and with his cunning outwits the boastful dwarf, and persuades him to show them the power of the Tarnhelm. Alberich puts on the **Cap**, and changes into a snake-like **dragon**. Then this creature crosses the stage, to the accompaniment, on the brass instruments, of the *MOTIVE* of the **Dragon** (20), a gliding movement, whose notes rise and fall in a manner which reminds us of the writhings of a snake.

Loge, not content with this, requests Alberich to change into something so small, that the narrowest crevice would contain it. Alberich complies, and changes into a **toad**, on which Wotan sets his foot, while Loge pulls the Tarnhelm off; and Alberich lies there, struggling to free himself. Loge binds him, and they drag him, between them, up on to the earth's surface. The NIBELUNGEN *MOTIVE* (16) accompanies their departure from Nibelheim; and the RING *MOTIVE* (7) resounds with ominous significance, as the fatal

symbol is transferred, with Alberich, on to the tops of the mountains, to spread its evil influence among the gods.

The scene now changes, and we again see the mountain-tops, and **Walhall,** as at the commencement of the second scene.

SCENE IV.

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ON THE MOUNTAIN-TOPS.

Wotan and Loge set their prisoner down on a rock. Loge answers **Alberich's** threats of vengeance with the ironical advice, to try and free himself first. Wotan names, as the price of his freedom, the gold of the Nibelung. Alberich once more uses the **Ring,** to call up from their underground homes the **Nibelungen,** who bring with them the **Treasure.** He then demands to be set free.

But, in addition to Treasure and Tarnhelm, Wotan desires to have the Ring, the symbol of Omnipotence.

Alberich would sooner lose his life than the Ring. He reminds Wotan of the unholy means by which he (Alberich) came into possession of it. The Nibelung, however, only sinned against himself, but Wotan, in possessing it, would sin against all that was, and is, and is to be. These ominous

words of Alberich's, however, are in vain. Wotan takes the Ring from him by force; and with a cry of "Woe is me, the most sorrowful slave of the sorrowful," Alberich sinks into an attitude of abject misery. We hear again the significant *Motive* of Renunciation (8). The sinister, syncopated passages, on the clarionets and violoncellos, which follow, form the *Motive* of **Alberich's Revenge** (21): we are thus shown, that sorrow for his loss is immediately followed by desire for revenge.

ALBERICH CURSES THE RING.

Wotan then bids Loge loose the Nibelung's bonds. When he finds that he is free, Alberich raises himself from the ground with a demoniacal laugh, and, in his impotent rage and misery, uses to its utmost the one power that is left him. In order that the results of his own crime may continue, and bring similar misery, and final annihilation to the gods, and to the whole world, he curses the Ring with a terrible **curse.** It shall bring death to him who wears it. No happiness shall be attached to the possession of it. Its owner shall suffer torments of anxiety;

and those who have it not, shall be consumed with envy. Everyone shall be eager to possess it; while no one, who uses its unlimited power, shall be content. It shall bring misery and death to all alike, till it again comes into Alberich's hands. "Thus, in his utmost need, does the Nibelung bless his Ring." With these fearful words Alberich disappears through a cleft in the rock.

A new motive is now attached to the Ring; the *Motive* of the **Curse** (22). This phrase has none of the sorrow expressed in the *Motive* of Renunciation (8); it is full of hatred, bitterness and defiance; the notes and intervals bring out with terrible distinctness and emphasis the fearful words of the Nibelung.

Fricka. Donner. Froh. Wotan, meanwhile, remains wrapped in contemplation of the Ring. Now, too, the other gods reappear on the scene. We hear the *Motive* of the Giants (12) as they come from afar, bringing **Freia** with them. At her approach the air seems lighter.

Freia. Fafner. Fasolt. The gold lies ready for the **Giants** as they enter. The gentler natured of the two, **Fasolt**, gives up Freia reluctantly, and wishes to have the gold piled up so high, that she will be hidden behind it. To

complete the pile, the **Tarnhelm** has to be added to the gold: but still Freia's bright glance is seen through a crevice. To stop this up, **Fafner** demands the Ring, which he sees on Wotan's finger. But Wotan will not part with it; and Loge reminds the Giants, somewhat ironically, that it belongs to the Rhine-daughters.

ERDA BEFORE THE ASSEMBLED GODS.

Again the Giants are about to drag Freia off between them, when suddenly darkness falls upon the scene, and, through an opening in the ground, comes up a woman's form, visible in the bluish light, which plays around her. It is **Erda,** the Spirit of the Earth, gifted with a knowledge of the secret forces of nature; forces that direct and govern all that is, and before whose power even gods themselves must give way.

With Erda's appearance arises the *Motive* of **Destiny** (23). This motive is similar to that of the Primeval Element (1); the intervals, the rhythm, and the ascending form of both motives being allied. Only, the Motive of Destiny

has a more earnest character, and is immediately followed by a descending movement, in a major key. This major is the *Motive* of the **Extinction of the Gods** (23a). Both motives resound on the violins. Now the latter motive accompanies the solemn words, with which Erda warns Wotan, that the gods' day is coming to a close, and that the end is near. This it is which has brought her up from the bowels of the earth. She advises Wotan to avoid the curse attached to the Ring, and thus to escape the danger of annihilation which threatens him and his race. Here recurs the *Motive* of Alberich's Revenge (No. 21).

THE EFFECT OF THE CURSE.

Having thus awakened fear and anxiety in Wotan's bosom, Erda slowly sinks down again into the earth. Wotan tries to follow her, but the other gods prevent his doing so. Her warning has not, however, been in vain. Wotan gives up the **Ring** to the Giants, who instantly begin to dispute over the possession of it. Each wants to have it, and Fasolt, who gets hold of it, falls a victim to the curse. A blow from Fafner's

cudgel brings him to the ground, dead. Wotan realises for the first time the terrible power of the curse, and resolves to seek out Erda, and to learn from her how to banish the fear and anxiety which have taken possession of him.

Walhall.

Fricka then draws his attention to **Walhall,** the castle which has been paid for with such anguish and trouble, and which no longer has the same charm for Wotan, in the light of evening, as it had, when, on awakening, he first contemplated its battlements. The majestic *Motive* of Walhall (9) is interrupted by the *Motives* of Destiny (23) and of the Ring (7).

THE RAINBOW-BRIDGE.

Meanwhile, the air has grown heavy as before a storm, and Donner calls up the thunder and lightning, to clear the surcharged atmosphere. The music here is a sound-picture: Donner's invocation to the elements forms the *Motive* of **Storm and Wind** (24), and is accompanied by the violins and violoncellos, while the rolling of the thunder follows on the double-basses. As the air gets lighter, and the clouds pass

away, a sweet melody grows out of the stormy elements, and a **Rainbow** spans the **Rhine**, from the shore on which the gods stand to **Walhall**, forming a beautiful bridge by which to enter the castle.

Here again a new motive resounds, one resembling the Motive of the Gold. This new phrase is the *Motive* of the **Sword** (25): for a new thought, born of his anxiety, arises in Wotan's breast. To protect Walhall and the gods from Fafner, in whose hands the Ring now lies, and from Alberich, who is planning dark schemes of revenge, Wotan resolves to create heroes and warrior-maidens, to fight in his cause, and the *Motive* of the Sword (played by a trumpet) signifies the strength they are to receive from Wotan.

THE GODS' ENTRY INTO WALHALL.

Now Wotan advances with Fricka, to cross the Rainbow-bridge. But, as he sets his foot on it, we hear the plaintive song of the **Rhine-daughters**, bewailing their lost treasure. Loge answers their complaint with his usual sarcasm, advising them, now that their Gold is lost to them, to sun them-

selves in the newly-acquired glory of the gods. These latter laugh as they cross the bridge. Loge looks after them scornfully. He knows they are hastening to their end, and he is almost ashamed of being in their company. However, after reflecting, he follows them, half reluctantly, over the bridge into Walhall.

The music of the Rhine-daughters resounds again in sad tones, and, in vivid contrast, the magnificent WALHALL *MOTIVE* (9) swells and rises, and soon dominates all other motives, till it forms a grand triumphal march by the whole orchestra, as the gods enter Walhall.

The Main Ideas of the Walküre.

The Reign of Law shown in the inevitable meeting and affection of those predestined for each other; in the triumph of Morality; in the futility of fighting against Fate; and in the impossibility of escape from the consequences of Disobedience.

The Walküre.

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The Overture.

The Overture of the Walküre forms a striking contrast to the state of perfect peace which we found in the opening music of the Rheingold. This second part of the drama opens with the orchestral representation of a distant **storm** in the forest. The wind sweeps through the violins; while on the violoncellos and double-basses we hear notes that resemble the footsteps of a man, making his way through the storm, at first hurriedly, and then more slowly and heavily, as if he were growing weary. The music rises and swells as the storm approaches, and then sinks again into a low murmur as the raging of the elements seems somewhat to abate, the flashes of lightning growing less frequent, and the peals of thunder more distant.

ACT I.

* * *

THE MEETING OF TWIN-SOULS.[1]

Siegmund. WHEN the curtain is lifted, we have before us the interior of a hut in the forest: the floor and walls are here and there covered by the skin of some wild animal, or by woven or plaited matting. In the centre of the room stands the trunk of a mighty **oak**, whose roots rise above the floor, and whose top branches have grown out through an aperture in the roof. A primitive hearth, in which a fire is burning, stands in the foreground. The evening darkness has already begun to fall.

Suddenly the door opens, and a man, clad in

[1] *Although I dislike footnotes, I am almost compelled, just as this work is going to press, to subjoin the following.*

As Marie Corelli has recently been scolded by a "censorious body" in the Press, for having made use of the above phrase, it may, perhaps, be as well to point out that this phrase was sanctioned, even if it was not actually invented, by Matthew Arnold.

skins, staggers into the hut, and across to the hearth, where he sinks down, as if so exhausted that his weary limbs will carry him no farther. He is **Siegmund,** Wotan's son, who has been pursued by his enemies through the forest, in the midst of the storm. A few low notes, on a violoncello, as he enters, form the *Motive* of the **Tired Siegmund** (26).

Sieglinde.

In his search for shelter, Siegmund has arrived, unconsciously, at the hut where his long-lost twin-sister, **Sieglinde,** is kept in ignoble bonds by her husband, Hunding. She now enters, and, bending over the half-unconscious Siegmund, whom she does not recognise, she tries to see if he is ill, or only sleeping. A few soft, sweet notes from the violins accompany her movement, and form a *Motive* of **Sieglinde's Compassion** (27).

MUTUAL CONFESSIONS.

Siegmund suddenly raises his head, with the cry of "A spring, a spring!" Sieglinde fetches him water from the spring. When he has quenched his thirst, his glance falls on her, and he observes her with growing interest: for the first time, the

Motive of **Siegmund's and Sieglinde's Love** (28) resounds on the violoncellos.

In answer to his questions, Sieglinde replies, "This house and this woman belong to Hunding," and she bids him await Hunding's return. Siegmund asks if her husband will refuse hospitality to a wounded man. Sieglinde anxiously requests to see the wounds: but he replies that they are only slight. Sieglinde then offers him mead, which he consents to drink only after she has tasted it. Her pity for him, in his helpless state, and his gratitude for her kindness, already form the beginning of love in their hearts.

However, Siegmund, now refreshed and strengthened, rises to his feet, and prepares to depart. He tells Sieglinde, that he is born to suffer, and that misery and misfortune cling to him, wherever he goes; he does not want to bring them to her. But she cries out unguardedly, that he does not bring misfortune into a house where it already exists. Siegmund turns, and looks at her inquiringly till her eyes drop under his gaze. He then goes slowly back to the hearth, with the words, "I will await Hunding." Thus they remain, silently watching each other, and from the orchestra resounds the *Motive* of Their Love (28),—long

drawn-out notes full of passion, of yearning, and of unutterable sweetness and pathos. Their common suffering and misfortune serve to link them together; and, without mutual recognition, they are drawn to each other by a love which is not the love of brother and sister.

* * *

The subsequent union of this brother and sister, irreconcilable with the universal instincts of human morality, assumes a different complexion, and has to be judged from a different standpoint, when the symbolical nature of the whole drama, and the mythological sources from which it is derived, are taken into consideration. Such unions, in the cases of gods and goddesses, are common to the legends of both Egyptian, classical, and Scandinavian mythology. It may suffice to mention the instances of Osiris and Isis, of Jupiter and Juno, of Cronos and Cybele, and of Fro and Freyja. The divine origin of the Wälsung twins is meant to set their action in a different light from that in which it would appear, had they been the offspring of human parents. Their blood relationship is merely the outward symbol of the mystic affinity of two divine natures, that complement each other in the

evolution of a perfect hero. They were, from the first, created and destined for each other by the god, who willed the generation of a new race, which, like all new races that are evolved according to this design and by this method, must, in their inception, obviously depend upon a union of the kind in question.

* * *

HUNDING'S APPEARANCE.

The reverie of the Wälsung pair is suddenly broken in upon by a harsh, rough, although somewhat heroic motive, on the horns. This phrase, which constitutes **Hunding's** *Motive* (29), in form and rhythm resembles somewhat the Nibelungen *Motive* (16) and the *Motive* of the Giants (12): for his character has also some of the same barbaric elements as theirs, and forms a marked contrast to that of the fair **Wälsung race,** sprung from a divine origin, to which Siegmund and Sieglinde belong.

Hunding.

On her husband's arrival, Sieglinde opens the door to him. At once he perceives the stranger, and questions Sieglinde by a look. She explains how she found Siegmund

lying exhausted on the hearth, and how she tended him. The soft and sad *Motive* of **Siegmund's and Sieglinde's Sorrow in Love** (30), which recurs often on the stringed instruments during this scene, resembles somewhat Sieglinde's *Motive* of Compassion (27).

After an intimation to Siegmund, that he will entertain him as a guest, **Hunding** roughly orders Sieglinde to prepare the meal. While she does so, Hunding observes the stranger, and is struck by his likeness to Sieglinde. In answer to Hunding's question, of how he came hither, Siegmund answers, "Through wood and meadow, over heath and hill, I was chased by the storm and by dire distress; I know not the way that I came. Whither I wandered, know I still less, but gladly would I gain information."

Sieglinde, meanwhile, has prepared their meal, and now joins them as they sit down to it. Hunding asks Siegmund to tell them more of his history. Sieglinde fixes an eager, questioning gaze on him; and we hear from his lips the following wild and weird narration.

SIEGMUND'S STORY.

Siegmund's father was named **Wolfe.** With a twin-sister Siegmund came into the world. One day Wolfe and his son, on their return home from a hunt in the woods, found their dwelling sacked by enemies: the house was burnt down, the mother killed, and no trace of the sister to be found.

Despised, hated, and hunted by their enemies, the father and son lived for a long time in the wilds of the woods. Once, in flight before their pursuers, the son (who took the name of **Wölfing**) was separated from his father, and could afterwards find no trace of him, except an empty wolf-skin in the forest. In his loneliness, Wölfing left the woods, to mingle with his fellow-men; but could find no friend, and only met with contempt and anger. Wherever he sought for happiness, he found only sorrow. He had therefore named himself "**Wehwalt**" (the master of sorrow).

He relates further, that a maiden, whose kindred wanted to force her into a loveless marriage, called him to her help. He fought for her, and killed her brother; but their friends and serfs rushed in

overpowering numbers upon him. With difficulty he protected her and himself for some time, till his spear and shield were hacked to pieces. He saw the maiden die; but managed to escape himself, though weaponless.

Then Siegmund rises and turns to Sieglinde, who is deeply moved by this tragic story. We now hear, for the first time, the *Motive* of the **Wälsung Race** (31), an heroic, but tragic, motive, which characterises the Wälsungen throughout the drama, and, by its similarity to the Walhall (Wotan) *Motive* (9), shows their divine origin.

Hunding's looks have grown blacker during this narration of Siegmund's: for in the latter he recognises the man against whom he was called out to fight. Arriving too late on the scene, Hunding had returned home, and now finds the enemy on his own hearth. Nevertheless, he will give Siegmund shelter for one night; but on the morrow the latter must prepare to fight with him.

SIEGLINDE'S SIGNS.

Hunding orders Sieglinde to prepare his nightly beverage, and then to go to rest. As she mounts

the steps to a door at the side of the scene, Sieglinde turns, and looks long and yearningly at Siegmund, and again we hear their LOVE *MOTIVE* (28). She then directs her glance significantly towards the **oak** in the centre of the hut, and the SWORD *MOTIVE* (25) resounds from a trumpet in the orchestra. Hunding suddenly turns, and makes an angry gesture to her to be gone; whereupon she disappears. Hunding collects his weapons, and follows her.

The Sword.

Siegmund is left alone on the hearth, by the slowly-dying fire. He is lost in thought for some time. Then he recollects how his father had told him of a sword, which he would find in his greatest distress. Is not that time come? He is alone and weaponless in his enemy's house. He sees here, miserable like himself, and in the power of this rough Hunding, a woman whom he loves; and he is unable to defend her. For how shall he fight without weapons; and where is the sword, "the strong sword," of which he stands so much in need?

Meanwhile the fire has got lower and lower, and now the ashes fall together: the red glow lights up that part of the oak on which Sieglinde's look rested, and a **Sword-hilt** is distinctly visible.

But Siegmund does not see it: he only thinks of the glow in Sieglinde's eyes before she went to rest, which was as the last rays of the setting sun, ere it sinks behind the mountains, and disappears from our sight.

Sieglinde. Now the fire has gone out, and it is quite dark. The door, by which **Sieglinde** disappeared, opens, and she enters. Hurrying up to Siegmund, she bids him use the night to save himself. For him, however, her mere presence is salvation. She then tells him that she became Hunding's wife by force. As she sat sadly at the marriage ceremony while the men drank, a stranger entered the hall. A hat, hanging over his face, hid one of his eyes. Here the WALHALL *MOTIVE* (9) tells us that the stranger was no less than Wotan. Sieglinde goes on to relate that in his hand he carried a sword, the blade of which he thrust into the trunk of the oak. Only the man who should be worthy of it would be able to pull the sword out of the tree. Guests came and went, and the strongest among them tried to wrench out the sword, but not one could move it an inch. Then Sieglinde knew, that only he who should be her friend and deliverer would win the weapon, and free her from her

sorrow and distress. She hopes that it may be Siegmund.

THE LOVE SCENE.

Siegmund has listened with increasing agitation to her recital, and, as she concludes, he seizes her in his arms, and passionately declares his love for her. At this moment the door of the hut opens wide; and the full moon floods the scene with light, and illumines the pair. Sieglinde starts back affrighted, but Siegmund reassures her, and leads her gently to a couch beside the hearth. Drawing her down to him, he sings the wonderful love-song, **"Winter-storms wane to the young May moon"** (32).

This song, with its delicate accompaniment of harps, violins, and violoncellos, is one of the loveliest in the drama. The whole scene, indeed, is one of great poetic beauty.

To Siegmund's caressing tones Sieglinde listens in a sort of ecstasy, giving up her whole being to the magic influence of this love. Gradually, in their transport of bliss, they become aware of their likeness to each other, and Sieglinde further recognises Siegmund's likeness to Wotan, whom she had

known as her father, under the name of **Wälse.** To her question of "Art thou really named Wehwalt?" Siegmund answers, that Wälse was his father, and that he is a Wälsung; but Sieglinde shall give him the name by which she loves him best. Sieglinde can hardly contain herself: she is sure now, that for him the sword was put into the oak, and she names him "Siegmund" (Sieg = victory).

With a cry of "Siegmund I am, and Siegmund is my name," he seizes the hilt of the sword. It is the weapon promised to him by his father: this is the hour in which he most needs it. The very love of the pair is the result, as it is also the cause, of their common distress. And the shadow of the curse, which Alberich's Ring cast on Wotan, rests also on the god's offspring. The sword, too, is the symbol of a power equal to that of the Gold: a power which sets law and destiny at defiance, and brings death in its wake.

Even in the midst of Siegmund's and Sieglinde's triumphant joy, we hear, like a solemn warning, the *Motive* of Renunciation (8).

Nothung. Now, with an effort of superhuman strength, Siegmund draws the sword out of the tree-trunk. He gives it the name of

"Nothung" (*Noth* = distress). Flourishing it high in the air, he seizes Sieglinde with his other arm. She now tells him that she is his own sister, whom he has won at the same time as the sword. She will also be his bride, and they will promote the Wälsung race by their union. The LOVE *MOTIVE* (28) sweeps wildly through the orchestra, while the SWORD *MOTIVE* resounds on a trumpet; and Sieglinde, with a cry, falls on to Siegmund's breast.

As the curtain is lowered, the orchestra closes suddenly with two ominous chords of the dark NIBELUNG music, which seems to threaten the love of the pair with Alberich's curse; and we feel that the tragedy of their existence is drawing to a climax.

ACT II.

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The Prelude.

The music which forms the Prelude of the second Act is likewise stormy and wild. The flight of the Wälsung pair from Hunding's house, is represented, on the violins, by the *Motive* of Flight (11); and a new motive, very similar to it in form, resounds on the same instruments: this last phrase, whose quick movement is full of energy and fire, is the **War Cry of the Walküren** (33). We are thus prepared for the scenes that are to follow.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

Wotan. Brünnhilde. The curtain rises, and, amidst wild, rocky scenery, we see **Wotan,** and his daughter **Brünnhilde,** the Walküre. Both are in armour, with spear and shield.

Wotan orders his daughter to prepare to fight in the combat between Siegmund and Hunding, and to win the victory for the former. Flourishing her spear, and uttering the joyous CRY OF THE WALKÜREN (33), Brünnhilde mounts the rocks, to prepare for the execution of Wotan's commands.

Fricka.

As she arrives at the top, however, the Walküre turns round, with a laughing admonition to Wotan to prepare for battle himself; for his wife **Fricka** is approaching. As she appears, Brünnhilde descends the rocks on the other side, and disappears from view, leaving her father to his fate. Wotan hails Fricka's appearance with anything but pleasure: for he knows by experience that it will be "the old storm, the old trouble"; nevertheless, he must submit to it.

FRICKA'S CALL FOR VENGEANCE.

In this part of the drama, Fricka appears as the Protectress of Marriage, and represents the social law, that marriage is a sacred institution, which may not be violated, even though it be a loveless and unhappy union. That the Wälsung pair have set at defiance all social laws, and

broken through long-established custom, is therefore, naturally, a fearful and lamentable crime in Fricka's eyes. So she has, in her present *rôle*, come to demand that Wotan shall help her to punish the perpetrators of this offence.

Wotan, in answer to Fricka's remonstrances, declares that he does not hold sacred the oath, which binds together those who do not love each other; and advises her to bless the bond of the lovers. Fricka's womanly indignation knows no bounds; and she exclaims, "Is it then the end of the eternal gods, now that thou hast created the wild Wälsung race?" She goes on to reproach him with having overthrown all that he once held sacred; with infidelity to herself; with having condescended to abase himself, to the extent of engendering a pair of common human beings, and of living in the woods, under the names of Wolfe and Wälse. She also gives vent to the expression of her hatred towards Brünnhilde, "the bride of his will, born to him through the bonds of a wild love" (in reference to his union with Erda).

Wotan answers Fricka, that she is unable to understand that which had never before occurred. His wish had been for a hero, who, "free from

the gods' protection, would free himself from their laws." For, only such a hero could accomplish the deed (*i.e.* the recovery of the Ring), which would deliver the gods from the danger in which they were at present, through Alberich's curse.

Fricka does not believe that such a hero could ever exist, and thinks that it is a new artifice of Wotan's to escape from her. But she reminds him that Siegmund is not that free, unprotected hero; for he owes his existence to a god, and his sword to divine favour. And she demands that Wotan shall deprive that sword of its magic power.

A new and oft-repeated motive, in this scene between Wotan and Fricka, is the *Motive* of **Wotan's anger** (34). It is a deep, low motive on the bassoons and bass clarionets, expressive of repressed ire, and, in its descending form, resembles the *Motive* of Wotan's Spear (10).

A GOD'S ANGUISH.

Wotan sees that he has deceived himself in thinking it possible to deliver Siegmund from his distress, and yet at the same time to make a

free hero of him. If the god allows Siegmund to be victorious, it will be contrary to the divine laws, which have been established by Wotan himself, and which constitute the power of the gods. His wife Fricka would in that case have to give way before the offspring of a mortal woman. Such a defeat of the goddess's power would bring scorn and disaster on to the whole race of gods, and would cause their ruin. In sorrow and anger, Wotan is compelled to acknowledge Fricka's right, and he takes the oath which she requires, to the effect that he will decide the combat in favour of Hunding, the outraged husband.

Brünnhilde.

Fricka, now satisfied, takes her departure. The **Walküre** then reappears, ready for battle, leading across the scene her war-horse, **Grane.** As she sees Wotan sitting motionless, his head hidden in his hands, she relinquishes her hold on the bridle, and, going up to her father, asks him anxiously, what is the matter. Letting his arm fall, and his head sink on to his breast, Wotan answers in a broken voice, "I am chained in my own fetters; I, the least free of all (beings)." Then he breaks out passionately, "Oh, distress of the gods; endless

sorrow; eternal fear; the most miserable of all am I." Brünnhilde, terrified, throws down helmet, spear, and shield, and, kneeling at Wotan's feet, begs him to tell her all his distress; for is she not the expression of his will, and a part of himself? Wotan caressingly strokes her upturned face, and then relates to her the whole story, as we already know it. He tells her of his longing for power, and of the treaties and laws he made, in order to acquire that power. He also touches on the story of the Gold, of the Ring, and of the curse attached to it. Further, he tells his daughter of Erda; how she warned him of the curse; how he sought her out in the bowels of the earth, to learn wisdom, and from her received the daughter to whom he is now confiding his troubles. He then touches on the ruin that threatens the gods through Alberich's curse; and tells Brünnhilde, that his only hope and desire has been for a free hero, to win back for them the Ring,—that fatal emblem, now guarded by Fafner, who has assumed the form of a dragon. Only such an event could put an end to Wotan's distress.

ERDA'S PREDICTION.

But the god now sees, that the curse, from which he tried to escape, has attached itself to him and his race. In his despair and misery, he is ready to give up everything for which he has striven and sinned; and only longs for the end, that he knows must now soon come. For Erda had told him, that when a child, which would be the fruit of hatred, should be born to Alberich, the end of the gods would be near at hand. Wotan has now heard that a woman, whom Alberich bought with his gold, has borne him a child. Wotan's blessing on the son of the Nibelung is, that he may have for inheritance the magnificent misery of the gods.

A motive, which is a combination of the *Motives* of Destiny (23) and of the Gods' End (23a), is introduced by the bassoons, during Wotan's recital, and may be called the *Motive* of **Wotan's Distress** (35).

Wotan now orders Brünnhilde to prepare to fight, on Fricka's behalf, against Siegmund. For the first time in her existence a discord springs up in Brünnhilde's bosom, occasioned by the conflict

of Wotan's own wishes. The god is fighting against himself, as it were, by deciding in favour of Hunding, against his beloved Siegmund. The love he bears to the latter, Wotan has instilled into Brünnhilde's heart also; and now she, too, must fight against Siegmund. For the first time, she fails to show implicit obedience to Wotan's wishes. Only when he threatens her with his anger,—anger that has brought terror and destruction into a world, which once laughed for the god's pleasure,—does the Walküre reluctantly gather up her arms. They have become so heavy, now that she has to use them against Siegmund; and it is with a slow, sad step, very unlike her usual buoyancy, that she goes to await the combat, in which she is to act such a hateful *rôle*.

THE FLIGHT OF THE LOVERS.

Meanwhile Wotan has departed, and Brünnhilde now disappears in a rocky cavern, till Siegmund shall arrive.

Siegmund. Sieglinde. (11) Again we hear the *Motive* of Flight, restless and hurried as the action it describes, as, like a hunted deer, Sieglinde enters,

breathless, and wishes to rush on. But Siegmund. who quickly follows on her steps, catches her up and holds her back, imploring her to rest. With soothing words and caresses, he tries to calm and comfort her, and, for the moment, he succeeds. But a nameless anguish, a fear of something, from which she must flee till she can go no farther, seems to have taken possession of Sieglinde. Starting up again out of Siegmund's arms, she entreats him to leave her, declaring that she is dishonoured, and has brought dishonour and shame on him. Even in the most blissful moments of their love she felt that she was under a curse. Now the full force of this feeling comes upon her, and she would save her only friend from the ruin which she believes is threatening them both. In a sort of terrified frenzy she cries that she can hear Hunding's horn, and can see the dogs rushing on Siegmund, to tear him to pieces. She then falls, fainting, into Siegmund's arms. He holds her carefully; and, seating himself on a rock, lets her gradually sink down, till her head rests on his knee, while her form lies extended on the ground. They remain thus in silence for some time, while now and again he bends over her, and kisses her forehead.

Brünnhilde. Meanwhile **Brünnhilde**, with horse and armour, comes slowly out of the cave, in which she has been waiting. She stands for a long time, silently observing Siegmund, whom she will have to kill in combat.

BRÜNNHILDE'S MISSION.

The solemn chords of the *Motive* of **Death** (36) resound on the trumpets and trombones; and the Walküre calls Siegmund's attention to herself, with the words, "Siegmund, look at me: it is I, whom thou wilt soon have to follow." She then announces to him the approach of death. Siegmund, impressed by her beauty and earnest manner, asks who she is, and whither she leads the heroes who follow her. "To Walhall shalt thou follow me," is her answer. "Shall I find in Walhall, my own father, Wälse?" asks Siegmund; and he learns that he will find him there. Moreover, Wotan's daughter will hand him the drinking-horn. But, fair as Brünnhilde appears to him, it is not of her that he thinks as he asks, if a woman will greet him joyfully in Walhall. When he learns that he will not see Sieglinde there, he

cries, "Greet Walhall and Wotan from me; greet all the heroes; greet also Wotan's fair daughter; but I will not follow thee thither. Where Sieglinde lives, in joy, or in sorrow, will Siegmund also remain." But Brünnhilde answers solemnly, that death will force him to leave Sieglinde: for he will be vanquished by Hunding. The very sword, on which he relies for victory, will be deprived of its magic force by him who gave it that force. When he hears this, Siegmund hastily bids the Walküre be silent, and not to awaken Sieglinde. Then, sorrowfully, he bends over the still motionless form, and caresses her. Alas for his beloved bride! A whole world has risen in arms against her; and now she is about to be deprived of his protection. And Siegmund cries shame on him who gave him the sword.

THE WALKÜRE'S COMPASSION.

The hero's sorrow and despair touch Brünnhilde deeply, as does the fact that all the delights of Walhall are nothing to him, in comparison with the sorrowful woman, who rests her tired head on his knee. The daughter of the god offers to pro-

tect Sieglinde herself: but Siegmund will not grant this right to anyone; and sooner than leave Sieglinde, he will kill her too. When he raises his sword over her, Brünnhilde can bear it no longer. She interposes her spear between the sword and its victim, crying, "Sieglinde shall live, and Siegmund with her"; and she promises to turn the tide of battle in his favour. His utter helplessness and misery have inspired Brünnhilde with a pity akin to love; and she forgets Wotan's commands, in her compassion for the unhappy pair. Siegmund looks gratefully after her as she disappears.

Hunding. Sieglinde still sleeps, blissfully unconscious of the scenes going on around her, and of the sorrow awaiting her. The sweet tones of SIEGMUND'S LOVE SONG (32) resound faintly in the orchestra: but the soft echo is immediately drowned by the sound of Hunding's horn; and then his voice is heard, calling to Siegmund. The latter once more kisses the sleeper's forehead, and then, gently letting her down on to the ground, he leaves her, rapidly mounts the rocks in the background, and is lost to view in dark thunder-clouds.

THE RIVALS' ENCOUNTER.

The music becomes wild and stormy, and continues so till the end of the scene.

Sieglinde's dreams are now of the scene in her childhood, when strange men carried her away, out of her burning home. She calls her brother, and awakes to find herself alone, in the darkness of the storm. Through this darkness, she hears the voices of **Hunding** and **Siegmund**; and a sudden flash of lightning reveals to her the forms of the two men, fighting at the top of the rocks. In her anguish, she cries to them to kill her first.

Brünnhilde. Wotan.

Suddenly a light shines over the scene: the **Walküre** *Motive* (38) is heard, and **Brünnhilde** is visible, protecting Siegmund with her shield. As the latter strikes a violent blow at Hunding, another red glow in the clouds reveals **Wotan,** who arrests the blow of Siegmund's sword with his spear. The sword breaks in two.

Brünnhilde has drawn back at the sight of Wotan, and leaves Siegmund unprotected. Now Hunding thrusts his sword into the defenceless breast of his enemy, and the latter sinks dying to

the ground. Again we hear the WÄLSUNG *MOTIVE* (31) and the solemn *MOTIVE* of DEATH (36).

Sieglinde has watched this scene with breathless anxiety. As she sees Siegmund fall, she utters a cry, and, throwing herself on the ground, remains as if lifeless.

Darkness has again covered the scene. **Brünnhilde** enters; and, hurrying up to the half unconscious **Sieglinde,** and, raising and supporting her in her arms, leads her away, with the words, "To horse, that I may rescue thee."

The light again appears on the rocks, and **Wotan** is seen, sorrowfully contemplating the dead body of his favourite hero. Then, waving his spear contemptuously, he bids Hunding go, and kneel before Fricka, and announce to her, that Wotan has avenged the insult offered to her. At Wotan's gesture **Hunding** sinks down dead.

Now the *MOTIVE* of WOTAN'S ANGER (34) resounds, and the god breaks out into wrathful exclamations against Brünnhilde's disobedience, and resolves that her punishment shall be terrible. Amid thunder and lightning he disappears, and the *MOTIVE* of his DISTRESS (35) closes the stormy music of this Act.

ACT III.

* * *

The Prelude.

The orchestra opens this Act with the wild, stormy music, known as the Ride of the Walküren. The Ride *Motive* (37), which resounds on the bassoons and violoncellos, springs from octave to octave in a very characteristic manner. The trilling of the wind and stringed instruments accompanies the rushing of the wind; and, through driving clouds and tempest, resound the exultant cries of the warrior-maidens as they ride upon the storm. The *Motive* of the Walküren (38), on the horns and trumpets, resembles closely the Ride *Motive* (37), and is likewise full of spirit and energy, and characteristic of their heroic, warlike nature.

THE RIDE OF THE WALKÜREN.

The curtain is lifted, and we see an open space, on the top of a mountain, surrounded by

pine trees: a high rock, at the side, forms the highest point of the mountain. At the back of the scene the horizon is free, and across the sky come driving clouds.

Four of the **Walküren,** in armour, with spear and shield, are already on the mountain-top, on the look-out for the other sisters. One after another, in flashes of light, the other four come riding down through the air, and alight on the mountain-top. They leave their horses in the wood, and enter the scene. Excited by wind and tempest, the eight Walküren hail each other with their joyous war-cry, waving their spears in the air; and the scene is one of the liveliest animation.

Brünnhilde. Sieglinde. **Brünnhilde** alone has not yet arrived: but soon she comes, riding in haste, and bearing a woman in front of her on the saddle. As she dismounts, supporting **Sieglinde,** the others go to meet her. The *MOTIVE* of WOTAN'S DISTRESS (35) resounds as she enters. He is following her; and she breathlessly begs her sisters to help her. Two of them spring up to the summit of the rock, and call out, that from the North a dark storm is coming, in which the god is approaching.

Hastily Brünnhilde relates the story of Siegmund and Sieglinde; and implores one of her sisters to lend her a horse, that she may escape, with Sieglinde, from Wotan's anger. But her sisters are horrified at her narrative, and dare not help her against their father.

BRÜNNHILDE'S PROPHECY.

Sieglinde, who until now has stared vacantly in front of her, apparently unconscious of what is going on around her, is now aroused by a caress from Brünnhilde. Sieglinde, however, does not want to be saved, now that Siegmund is dead; and she entreats Brünnhilde to thrust her sword into her heart. But Brünnhilde bids her live, for the sake of the hero, whom she will bear,—the pledge of Siegmund's love. A sudden beam of joy lights up the face of Siegmund's unhappy bride, and, falling on her knees before the Walküre, she now begs her to save her and her child.

Brünnhilde resolves to stay, and brave Wotan's anger, while Sieglinde escapes to the wood where Fafner dwells, and, in the shape of a dragon, guards the Ring. There she will be safe from

Wotan. Brünnhilde then gives Sieglinde the pieces of Siegmund's sword, for her son. The boy is to be called "Siegfried," and will be "the world's most glorious hero." To these words of Brunnhilde's, resounds, on the horns, the *Motive* of **Siegfried, the Wälsung** (39), a ringing triumphant motive, which, by its prominence in the music of the drama, is worthy of the hero whom it represents. But at present it is only a momentary lull in the storm.

Wotan. The angry god is rapidly approaching, and Sieglinde must depart. She blesses Brünnhilde, and hurries away, just as **Wotan's** voice is heard, commanding Brünnhilde to stay. The Walküre's heart sinks, and she again begs her sisters to try and help her. They bid her hide behind them, and not answer the call.

BRÜNNHILDE'S PUNISHMENT.

Now their angry father enters, and, standing before the assembled Walküren, bids them give up Brünnhilde. They try to soften his resolve to punish her: but their entreaties are useless. Of them all, she was the only one who was

acquainted with his innermost thoughts: none knew his will as she did. And now she has broken the bond that existed between herself and her father. She has set him at defiance, and disobeyed his command. She has used against him, the very weapons his love had assigned to her; and at present she is hiding from the well-merited punishment.

When she hears Wotan say this, **Brünnhilde** steps slowly down from her hiding-place, and, standing before him, awaits her sentence. Once more he shows her the offence of which she is guilty. Then he goes on to tell her, what is to be her punishment. She can no longer be a Walküre. No longer will Wotan send her from Walhall's halls, to bring to him, from the battle-field, his chosen heroes: no more will she hand him the drinking-horn at the banquets of the gods, or receive his caresses. She is cut off from the gods, rejected from the race of immortals; and Wotan's face she will never see again.

The sisters break out in exclamations of "Woe!" Brünnhilde herself cries, "Wilt thou take from me all that thou once gavest?" Nor is that all her punishment. She shall become a

mortal woman; and here, on this very mountain, she shall be left defenceless and asleep, until her awakening by one, to whom she henceforth shall belong.

In vain the other Walküren beg Wotan to revoke this sentence: in vain they cry, that the shame which has fallen on their sister will affect them too. Wotan answers, that she is banished out of their midst; and no longer may she ride with them through the air. She will lose her divinity and immortality, and shall serve the man who is to be her master: at his hearth she must sit and spin, the object of universal scorn and derision.

At this terrible sentence, Brünnhilde falls, with a cry of anguish, at Wotan's feet. The god then commands the other Walküren, if the lot of their sister horrifies them, to avoid her; and never to offer her comfort or consolation. Whichever of them should dare to do so, would meet with a similar fate. With these words he dismisses the terrified Walküren; and a long silence ensues.

BRÜNNHILDE'S JUSTIFICATION.

The *Motive* of Wotan's Anger (34) has been the predominating one, up to this point. Now, as

Brünnhilde at length raises her head, and tries to look into Wotan's averted face, a soft, pleading motive accompanies her attempt to justify herself, and might be called the *Motive* of **Brünnhilde's justification** (40).

She piteously asks, if the crime she committed was so shameful and so dishonourable, that it need be punished with shame and dishonour. She knew, that Wotan had loved Siegmund, and had been forced by Fricka to destroy his favourite hero. Moreover, she had been compelled to witness, what Wotan had not seen,—Siegmund's sorrow and despair. Her compassion for the unfortunate hero had amounted almost to love; and her one desire had been, to share life or death with him. She had not realised, that Wotan, too, was in distress, and that stern necessity had compelled him to act contrarily to his own desires. Only now does she perceive this.

But she reminds Wotan, that she shares his divine nature, and is still a part of his being; and that, in dishonouring her, he brings shame on himself also. And she begs that, if she must leave Walhall, and submit to the rule of a mortal man, he who wins her may at least not be worthless,

and a coward. But Wotan answers, that he cannot choose for her.

She then reminds him of the fair race of the Wälsungen, who owe their origin to the god himself. She knows that a noble hero will arise, from the union of the Wälsung twins. But Wotan silences her, and will not hearken to her wishes: he can but leave her to her fate, after causing her to fall into a deep sleep.

Terrified at the idea of so dreadful a punishment, his daughter clasps his knees, and entreats him at least to protect her defenceless sleep by a fire, that shall surround the mountain; so that only a hero, who knows no fear, may be able to pass through the flames, and awaken her. A soft, rocking movement begins on the violins and violoncellos, and develops later into the **Slumber** *Motive* (41).

THE GOD'S FAREWELL TO HIS DAUGHTER.

Brünnhilde's suppliant entreaties at length soften Wotan so far, that he consents to her last request. Then, raising her tenderly, and holding her to his breast, he takes a fond farewell of his favourite

daughter, his beloved, heroic child. He looks for the last time into the eyes, which he had so often seen shining through the storm, in the midst of battle: for the last time he kisses the mouth, which hereafter will belong to a man happier than he, the god. Then leading her gently to a mossy **rock,** beneath a wide-spreading pine tree, he kisses her eyelids, with the words, "Thus does the god leave thee; thus does he kiss away thy divinity." Brünnhilde has fallen into a deep sleep in his arms, and he lays her gently down on the rock. After one more long look at the form and features, which he will never see again, Wotan closes the visor of her helmet, and covers her with her shield.

Then, solemnly and resolutely, the god steps into the middle of the scene, and stretches out his spear towards the rocks, with an invocation to Loge, to surround the scene with fire. The **Fire** *Motive* (42) begins to flicker up in the orchestra.

The Fire.

Wotan then strikes the rock, and a flame springs forth. The god passes the point of his spear all around the scene, and, as it goes by every rock, **flames** arise from each, and burn higher and higher. The whole

scene is surrounded by tongues of fire, which light up with a lurid glow the forms of the god, and of the sleeping Walküre. The wild, chromatic FIRE *MOTIVE* (42) runs through the stringed instruments in the orchestra. The music increases in volume of sound, as the fire increases into a **conflagration.** In direct contrast to this weird, restless fire-music, is heard the sweet, soft, peaceful *MOTIVE* of SLUMBER (41), resembling, in its regular, recurrent movement, the long-drawn breathings of some one asleep. At Wotan's words, "He who fears the point of my spear shall never come through the fire," the *MOTIVE* of SIEGFRIED (39) mingles in triumphant chords with the SLUMBER *MOTIVE* (41). Wotan then disappears in the fiery glow; and the music, the gentle rhythm whereof seems to lull the listener to sleep, gradually sinks as the flames die down; and then the sounds, too, die away into silence.

The Main Ideas of Siegfried.

Courage, born of Innocence, outvies all Cunning; and, when inspired by the secret of Love, imparted by Nature, proves itself equal to all tasks.

Siegfried.

* * *

The Overture.

The overture to "Siegfried" opens with the *Motive* of **Meditation** (43) on the bassoons. This motive is attached, as we shall see when the curtain rises, to Mime's person. The deep, ominous sound of this motive shows us, that his meditation is for no good purpose. The object of this meditation we learn, by the repetition of the Ring *Motive* (7). The Sword *Motive* (25) also resounds. The *Motive* of Alberich's Triumph (18) crowns these gloomy harmonies. We also hear the characteristic movement of the Dragon *Motive* (20), winding in and out, in the bass.

ACT I.

* * *

A FOREST HOME.

Mime. THE curtain rises to the rhythmic movement of the NIBELUNGEN *MOTIVE* (16), on the stringed instruments; and the dwarf **Mime** is discovered, hammering impatiently at the **Sword**, which he has just made. The interior of his home, which is in the depths of the primeval forest, resembles a huge cavity in a rock, with two openings into the forest, through which the daylight enters. Pieces of rock in the background form a forge, near which are the bellows, while various instruments are scattered around.

The Sword. Mime, after hammering away for a few minutes, leaves off, with a gesture of despair, and utters a bitter complaint to the effect, that all his work is in vain; for the best Sword he can make is a mere plaything in the hands of Siegfried, for whom it is intended. But there is a Sword, that the youth, with all his strength, would not be able to break. This weapon must be made from the broken pieces

of his father Siegmund's sword, which (as we shall hear later) were given to Mime by Sieglinde for her son. With this weapon, the dwarf reflects, Siegfried would be able to kill Fafner, the dragon, and thus rescue the Treasure, which the creature is guarding in its den. Then Mime could take possession of the Ring.

But how to forge this Sword? With all his art Mime cannot succeed in making a new weapon, out of the broken pieces. But a sword Siegfried must have; so the dwarf taps and hammers away, though he knows that the weapon he is making will immediately break in Siegfried's hands.

Siegfried. Now a quick, light-hearted *Motive* from the violins, breaks in on Mime's meditation, — the *Motive* of the **Youthful Siegfried** (44). And, as it resounds, the youth himself, dressed in skins, with a silver horn at his side, comes rushing out of the woods into the hut. He is leading a **bear,** which he laughingly sets on to the terrified Mime, who runs and hides behind the hearth.

When Siegfried hears that a sword is ready for him, he lets the bear go out into the forest again, and Mime creeps tremblingly out of his hiding-place. The dwarf's miserable, little form presents

a ludicrous contrast to Siegfried's stalwart, robust, young figure; and not less striking is the contrast of their characters. While Mime is cowardly in the extreme, and, at the same time, sly and malicious, Siegfried possesses all the fearless light-heartedness of youth, and is frank and honest, with the naïve innocence of one who has passed all his life in the woods, surrounded by the beauty of Nature, and has seen nothing of the world and of men. He is high-spirited, endowed with irrepressible buoyancy and gaiety of spirit, and longs to get out into the world, in search of adventure. Now he relates to Mime, that he has been seeking in the forest for a more congenial companion than the wretched little dwarf, at whose moral and physical weakness the strong, healthy youth evinces deep disgust, and in teasing whom he takes a mischievous delight. At the sound of his horn,—so Siegfried tells Mime,—the bear, which he had brought home with him, came growling out of the woods.

SIEGFRIED'S ANGER.

Mime now gives him the sword, which he has been making. Without the slightest effort Sieg-

fried strikes the anvil with it, and the sword flies into pieces. The remainder, which he holds in his hand, Siegfried throws away, angrily. He has lost all patience with Mime, who chatters to him of giants, of battles, and of mighty deeds, not forgetting his own (Mime's) ability; and yet he cannot even forge a sword that shall not break. Were he not such a miserable little wretch, says Siegfried, he would finish Mime off with his own weapon, and be rid of all this vexation.

At this outbreak, Mime, who has carefully kept out of his way, retorts that Siegfried is always ungrateful, and always forgets what the dwarf has done for him. He then offers Siegfried some food; but the youth knocks it out of his hand, and impatiently turns his back on him. Mime, in an injured tone, complains that this is the reward for all the love and care he has bestowed on Siegfried. To the whining *Motive* of **Mime's Complaint** (45) he goes on to tell Siegfried, that he warmed and fed him as an infant, that he gave him toys and a sounding-horn, and taught him wisdom. Even now he sits at home slaving for Siegfried, while the latter roams in the forest to his heart's content. But all the thanks he gets are, that Siegfried hates and torments him.

SIEGFRIED'S PARENTS.

The young man, who has turned round, and watched Mime, during this effusion, tells him that there is one thing the dwarf has not taught him; and that is, how to like him: for he hates the sight of the dwarf, and all birds and beasts of the forest are dearer to him than is Mime. How comes it, then, that he still returns to Mime's dwelling? Mime answers, that it is filial affection, which brings him back.

Taking no notice of this remark, Siegfried goes on to say, that he had heard the birds sing happily in the spring, and had seen them pair, and bring up their young ones. The foxes, too, he had seen with their whelps. Now he wants to know, where Mime's wife is, that he may call her "mother." These words of Siegfried's are accompanied, on the violoncellos and violins, by a sweet, soft melody, full of longing, which expresses most pathetically **Siegfried's Love of Nature**, and his yearnings to experience the affection, which he sees manifested by the animals towards their young.

But Mime pettishly tells him not to be so

stupid; that he is neither bird nor fox. Then Siegfried says, "Didst thou, perchance, make me without a mother?"

In considerable confusion Mime answers, that he is both father and mother to him. But Siegfried cries out, that he lies: for young things resemble their parents. He has seen his own image in a brook, and knows that he is no more like Mime, than a shining fish is like a frog.

But now he knows why it is, that he returns to Mime: it is, in order that he may learn who his father and mother were. For some time Mime evades giving a direct answer to his questions, till Siegfried seizes him by the throat, and only lets him go, when the dwarf makes a sign, that he will tell him what he wants to know.

Accompanied in the orchestra by a mournful echo of the WÄLSUNG *MOTIVES* (11, 27, 28, and 30) of the "Walküre," Mime relates the touching story of Sieglinde's sufferings: of how he found her in the forest, and brought her home to his hut: of how she died at Siegfried's birth, giving the child into Mime's care. The latter then takes this opportunity of recommencing his old SONG, "As a peevish child, I brought thee up."

Siegfried interrupts him impatiently, in order to

ask what his mother's name was; why his own name is Siegfried; and who his father was. Mime recollects that the mother was called Sieglinde; that she had told Mime to give the boy the name of Siegfried, and that he would grow into a strong and beautiful hero. What his father's name was, the dwarf does not know, only that he was slain in combat.

SIEGFRIED'S SOLE INHERITANCE.

On Siegfried's demanding a proof of the veracity of this story, Mime produces the pieces of **Siegmund's Sword,** which Sieglinde had given into his keeping. Siegfried orders him to make a strong weapon with these pieces, that with it he may go off, out into the world, far away from Mime, and be as free as the birds of the air, or the fish of the sea. A joyous melody accompanies his words: the *MOTIVE* of **Siegfried's Love of Freedom** (46), which here denotes his joy at the idea of leaving Mime, and at the knowledge that Mime is not his father, and the dwarf's abode not *his* home.

With these words, Siegfried rushes out into the forest. In vain Mime calls after him. The dwarf

is again left alone, bemoaning his inability to forge **Nothung** (the Sword) anew, as he knows that it is the only weapon with which Siegfried can kill Fafner, and thereby enable Mime to take possession of the Ring.

A GOD'S WANDERINGS.

Wotan. In the midst of his anxious meditations the dwarf is interrupted by the entrance of a stranger, who bears, in this part of the drama, the name of WANDERER, but whom we recognise as **Wotan.** His appearance is accompanied, on the wind instruments, by the *MOTIVE* of the **Wanderer** (47), which, in its solemn, and somewhat weird chords, suggests his disguised character, and emphasises the quiet self-possession and dignity, with which he confronts Mime's inhospitable reception. For the dwarf tells him to be gone, and not to add to his (Mime's) misfortunes by coming to spy on his loneliness. The Wanderer offers to give him counsel and advice; but Mime will not have them, and considers himself wise enough already. He only wishes to be left alone.

But the Wanderer seats himself near the hearth,

notwithstanding Mime's protestations, and offers his head as a forfeit, if he cannot answer to Mime's satisfaction any three questions, which the latter shall put to him. To get rid of his unwelcome visitor, Mime consents to this; and asks, firstly, "What race inhabits the depths of the earth?" He receives the answer, "The Nibelungen; and Alberich was once their master." The second question he puts is, "What races dwell on the earth's surface?"; and gets for reply, "The Giants." Wanderer also relates to him the story, of how these Giants came into possession of the Gold and the Ring, and how Fafner now guards this in his den.

At the third question of "What race lives on the cloudy heights?" Wanderer rises, and, to the majestic WALHALL *THEME* (9), answers, "The Gods; and Wotan is their head." As his spear touches the ground, a slight clap of thunder is heard, which nearly frightens Mime out of his wits.

MIME'S WISDOM.

Wanderer has thus freed his head from the forfeit; and Mime hopes he will go. But now it is the

dwarf's turn to answer, under the same conditions, three questions put to him by Wotan. Anxiously the dwarf awaits the first, which is, "To what race did Wotan show least favour, and which was yet the dearest to him?" Mime answers readily, "The Wälsung race: Siegmund and Sieglinde owed their origin to Wälse; and from their union came Siegfried, the strongest scion of the race." The second question is, "With what sword shall Siegfried fight Fafner?" To this Mime replies joyfully, "Nothung"; and he proudly parades his knowledge on this point. Thirdly, Wotan asks, "Who will make the strong sword anew, out of the pieces?" At these words Mime jumps up in terror. He cannot answer this question, for it is the very thing he himself wants to know. Wanderer now rises, and tells him, that, instead of about that which would have been of some use to him, Mime has sought to acquire knowledge, that is utterly worthless. Thus his head has fallen a forfeit to the Wanderer; but the latter adds, that he will leave it to be chopped off by one who has no fear. Such an one, the god continues, shall also forge Nothung anew, and shall be Fafner's destroyer. Having thus spoken, Wotan goes out into the wood.

A LESSON IN FEAR.

Mime, left alone, stares in silence through the opening, by which Wanderer disappeared. Suddenly, a bright light flickers over the scene, and Mime, trembling violently, cries out that it is Fafner, coming to devour him; and then falls in a heap, beneath the anvil.

Siegfried. Siegfried's voice is now heard, calling to know, if the sword is ready. Then he enters, and stops short in astonishment at not seeing Mime. At his call, however, a feeble voice from behind the anvil answers; and hearing that Siegfried is alone, Mime creeps out. Siegfried asks, if he has been making the sword for him behind there. "The Sword, the Sword," sighs Mime, "how shall I make it?" Then he remembers the Wanderer's parting words, that only one who knows no fear will be able to perform that feat; though, at the same time, he will deprive Mime of his wise head. In order to avert this fate, he must try and teach Siegfried what fear is.

During Mime's reflections, Siegfried becomes impatient, and seizes hold of him: but Mime assures him, that he was sunk in meditation for Siegfried's good. "Thou hadst sunk even under

the seat," answers Siegfried, with a laugh. Now the cunning dwarf tells him, that Sieglinde had made him promise never to let her son out into the world, before he knew what fear was. "Is it an art?" asks the youth.

Then comes a thrilling and graphic description, from Mime, of what fear is; and it seems to Siegfried a wonderful and most desirable sensation, which he longs to experience: but how can he learn it?

The trembling movement of the stringed instruments, accompanying Mime's description, is weird and uncanny. We hear at the same time the FIRE *MUSIC* (42) and SLUMBER *MOTIVE* (41), which have here a double signification: viz., that Siegfried, the hero who knows no fear, will make his way through the fire and awaken Brünnhilde, and also, that his first experience of fear, will be at the sight of the sleeping Walküre.

SIEGFRIED FORGES HIS OWN SWORD.

Mime now tells Siegfried of Fafner, and that he will learn from the dragon what fear is. But Siegfried has, as yet, no sword: and now, seeing that Mime will never make one, the young man

resolves to do so himself. He sets about it at once, heedless of Mime's remark, that, if he had diligently applied himself to learning forging, it would now be useful to him. Siegfried tells the dwarf not to interfere, or he, too, will fall into the fire.

After various offers to instruct him, all of which are rejected, Mime watches him in silence, and with astonishment at the strength he exhibits while at work.

Nothung.

But the dwarf is in a dreadful dilemma: for, if Siegfried kills Fafner, Mime's own head will also fall by the same sword. On the other hand, if Siegfried does not kill Fafner, Mime cannot get the Ring. He is aroused from this unpleasant reverie, by Siegfried's asking him the name of the sword he is making. On being told that its name is "**Nothung,**" the young man commences a sort of **forging song,** with which he accompanies his work, and the refrain of which is "Nothung, the Sword."

MIME'S ARTIFICES.

Mime, meanwhile, continues his reflections, and suddenly hits on a brilliant idea. He will prepare a beverage for Siegfried, which he will offer to the young man after his fight with the dragon,

and which will cause him to fall into a deep sleep. Then Mime can kill him with his own sword, and take possession of the Ring.

No sooner thought, than done. The dwarf commences at once to prepare the fatal draught. Siegfried, perceiving his occupation, calls out, mockingly, "Mime, the artist, now learns cooking: but what he cooks I will not taste." The young man then continues his work, blowing the bellows, and melting down the steel with great ardour. Mime also finds great pleasure in his own occupation. He is delighted at his own idea, and exults already in the thought of his triumph; of the power which he will acquire by means of the Ring; and of how the whole world will have to serve him

As Siegfried's work progresses, the falls of the hammer on the anvil are accompanied, on cellos and violins, by a characteristic and lusty **Forging** *Motive* (48). At length the **Sword** is completed; and Siegfried, telling Mime to see how his weapon cuts, holds it high above his head, and, with one stroke, cuts in two the anvil on which he has been working. He then flourishes the sword triumphantly in the air, while Mime falls, in disgust and astonishment, on to the floor. The curtain descends.

ACT II.

* * *

The Prelude.

This Act opens with a short prelude, in which the sinister *Motive* of Alberich's Revenge (21), played by the clarionets, predominates. The bassoons answer with the Ring *Motive* (7), and a second, heavy, winding *Motive* of the **Dragon** (49) resounds in the first bars from the double-basses. We are thus prepared for the dark scene on which the curtain rises.

A NOCTURNAL WATCH.

It is black night in the depths of the forest. In the background we are just able to distinguish a huge cavity in the rock, in which the darkness is, if possible, thicker and more impenetrable than elsewhere.

Alberich. As the *Motive* of the Curse (22) comes from the trombones, a dark figure steals on to the scene. It is the Nibelung **Alberich,** come to keep his unholy watch, in the dead of night, by Fafner's den.

As the Ride *Motive* (37) resounds, on the wind instruments, a stormy wind suddenly comes through the forest, and a light shines over the scene.

"Fearful day, art thou already breaking," cries Alberich, "or is it the slayer of the dragon who approaches?"

Wotan. The light disappears, and out of the darkness of the forest comes the **Wanderer.** Catching sight of the Nibelung, Wanderer asks who it is that is watching at the entrance to Fafner's hole.

A sudden break in the clouds lets the light of the moon fall on Wotan's figure. Alberich recognises him, and is seized with terror and anger. He is sure Wotan has come for the same purpose as himself; namely, to await Fafner's death, and to take possession of the Ring. But he knows that the god cannot himself take away from the dragon that Ring, which he took by force from Alberich, and with which he paid for

Walhall's glory. Of these facts Alberich now reminds him, in demoniacal joy at the thought of the anxiety which Wotan feels about the fate of the Ring, and the fear he has that Alberich may get it into his own hands again.

But Wotan, with the quiet, unmoved dignity, which characterises him as Wanderer, answers, that he has only come to look on, and not to act. He who wins the Ring will be its master. Alberich must look for rivalry on Mime's part; for the latter is bringing danger in the person of Siegfried, who, as yet, knows nothing of god or Ring, but whom Mime is using for his own ends. But Wanderer adds, that, perhaps, if Fafner is warned of the approaching danger, he will give up the Ring, and escape the curse.

Fafner. Wanderer calls to the dragon, to awake. Alberich, astonished, can hardly believe his ears: but, on hearing Fafner's voice, he calls out to the dragon, that a strong hero is coming to attack him. From the depths of his den, in a deep and awful voice, the creature answers, "I hunger for him." Alberich then tells him, that it is only the Ring, which the hero wants: if Fafner will let the Nibelung have it, the latter will ward off the combat, and

Fafner will live long in peace. For answer, Fafner, with a yawn, growls out, "I lie in possession: let me sleep."

Wanderer laughs at the Nibelung's discomfiture: but adds, in solemn tones, that everything works out its appointed destiny, and that no one can alter the course of fate. His words are accompanied by the *Motive* of Destiny (23).

With this parting warning, Wotan disappears into the woods: lightning and a stormy wind follow in his wake.

DAYBREAK.

Alberich watches Wanderer as he departs; and the Nibelung utters angry threats. Now it is growing daylight, and Alberich hides in a cleft of the rock.

Mime. Siegfried. Soon the dwarf, **Mime**, and **Siegfried** appear on the scene. The former looks anxiously around the spot, which is already lit up by the first rays of the rising sun. Siegfried asks, if it is here that he will learn what fear is; adding that, if he does not, he will continue his wanderings alone: for he wants to be rid of Mime. The latter assures him, that if he does

not learn it here, he will hardly do so anywhere else. The dwarf then points out the dark hole, where Fafner lies hidden, and describes to the young man his awe-inspiring size and horrible jaws, as well as the poisonous vapours which the creature breathes out; and the snaky tail, which would crush Siegfried's limbs like glass. But the young man is not disheartened, or even astonished, at all this; and asks, if the creature has a heart. Mime answers in the affirmative; and, in the orchestra, we seem to hear the beating of the hard, terrible heart.

"Then," says Siegfried, "I will thrust Nothung into his heart: is that, perchance, Fear?" "Only wait," answers Mime, "till you see and hear him; and when all swims before your eyes, when the ground seems to sink beneath your feet, and your heart beats fearfully, then think of how Mime loves you."

"You shall not love me," cries the youth: "get out of my sight!"

Mime intends to go, and await the issue of the combat at the spring near by: but Siegfried laughingly threatens to let the creature go thither, to quench his thirst, if Mime is there. Then, with an impatient gesture, he motions to the

dwarf to be gone, which the latter proceeds to do, uttering at the same time the loving wish, that Siegfried and Fafner may kill each other. Left alone, Siegfried sits down under a lime tree, rejoicing to be at length freed from Mime's hateful presence.

SIEGFRIED AND NATURE.

A sort of dreamy, tremulous movement resounds from the stringed instruments, and resembles the rustling of leaves in the breeze, and the various intermingled **sounds of the forest.**

Siegfried has sunk into a dreamy mood. He thinks of his parents, and wonders what they were like. Certainly, his father must have been like himself: for, if Mime had a son, would he not be just as ugly and grey, as small and crooked, as the dwarf, and go limping along in the same fashion? The very thought of Mime makes Siegfried angry. However, he leans back, and looks up into the branches again for some time, in silence. Only the birds' songs, and the woodland sounds, are heard. Then the thought of his mother comes into his mind. How did she look? Her eyes must have been like the

gentle eyes of a hind, only much more beautiful. And at his birth she had died! Did all human mothers die, because of their sons? That would indeed be sad. He then wishes that he could see her,—his mother, a human woman. This pathetic longing of Siegfried's for a mother's love is all the more touching, because it is a love of which he can only guess the power from what he has seen of it in nature; from the love of birds and animals for their young: but human affection has, as yet, had no part in his young life.

SIEGFRIED AND THE DRAGON.

But now his attention is again attracted to the SONG OF THE BIRDS (played by the clarionets and oboes). He resolves to try and imitate it; and then, perhaps, he will be able to understand it. For an instrument he cuts off one of the reeds, growing around the spot. But he cannot imitate the song successfully; and, after a few vain and discordant attempts, he gives it up in despair.

Fafner.

But on his horn he can produce something better. Putting it to his lips, he blows a lively melody. At length, in the dark cavity in the background, something

moves; and **Fafner,** in the form of a tremendous, lizard-shaped, snaky dragon, crawls out of his den, and yawns aloud.

Siegfried turns, stares at him in astonishment, and then laughs. His melody on the horn has brought along a nice comrade for him now.

Fafner, perceiving Siegfried, asks, "Who is there?"

"Oh!" cries Siegfried, "art thou an animal that can speak? Here is one who does not know what fear is: can he learn it from thee?"

Fafner laughs. "I wanted to drink, and now I can also eat," he replies; and opens his jaws.

Siegfried springs lightly to one side, and, as the creature raises its head to spit poison and fire at him, he quickly thrusts his sword into its heart. It gives one bound with the pain; and then sinks to the ground. In a faint voice, Fafner asks who is the bright-eyed boy, that has achieved such a feat. He also tells Siegfried, how he was once a giant; and became master of the Ring, on which lies a curse, and which he has been guarding in his den, after having assumed the form of a dragon, by means of the Tarnhelm.

He warns Siegfried to beware of the curse.

Treachery always surrounds the master of the Ring. He bids the young man note his (Fafner's) fate; and the orchestra repeats the warning, in the *Motive* of Alberich's Revenge (21).

THE POWER OF THE DRAGON'S BLOOD.

Siegfried then tells Fafner his name; and the latter repeats it with his last breath. Now Siegfried draws his sword out of the enormous carcass. As he does so, a drop of the **dragon's blood,** still hot, falls on his finger. He put it to his mouth, to cool the burning sensation. As he does this, his attention is again attracted to the Song of the Birds; and suddenly he finds that he can understand the meaning of their song. For one of them sings to him, that the Nibelung's Treasure now belongs to him; and he will find it in the dragon's den. The Tarnhelm alone would be very useful to him: but the Ring would make him master of the world.

On hearing this, Siegfried disappears into Fafner's den.

Mime. Alberich. As soon as he has gone, the two brothers, **Alberich** and **Mime,** both

come running towards the spot, from different sides of the scene. As they encounter each other, both break out into angry exclamations of hatred and defiance. Each is naturally bent on getting the Ring, which each considers as his own property :—Alberich, because he stole the Gold, in the first instance, and made the Ring; and Mime, because he has brought up Siegfried, in order that the latter may get it for him. After they have quarrelled angrily for some time, Mime proposes a division of the Treasure. All *he* wishes for, is the Tarnhelm: that is but fair, seeing that he made it. Alberich may have the Ring and the Gold. Alberich laughs scornfully at this proposal. "The Tarnhelm indeed! How sly thou art. I should never sleep in safety from thy wiles."

"Then," cries Mime, in a rage, "thou shalt have neither Ring nor Tarnhelm."

Siegfried.

While they wrangle thus, the young **Siegfried** comes out of the cavern, carrying the very objects, about which they have been disputing. Alberich utters a curse. Mime laughs derisively, and, after telling Alberich to ask Siegfried for the Ring, slips off into the wood.

But Alberich remembers Wotan's words, that he

who wins the Ring shall be its master ; and he, too, disappears into the forest.

The Ring. The Tarnhelm. Meanwhile, Siegfried has been examining the objects which he holds in his hand : but he has not the slightest idea, of what use they can be to him. The **Tarnhelm** he hangs on his girdle, and the **Ring** he puts on his finger.

The Bird. He again listens to the BIRD'S SONG ; and this time it warns him not to trust **Mime.** The latter now approaches, muttering to himself, that he must at present be very cunning. Then, greeting Siegfried, he asks him if he has learnt what fear is. Siegfried answers that he has not ; and he tells Mime that he hated the dwarf, who set him on to kill Fafner, far more than he did the dragon, for whom he was almost sorry.

MIME'S EVIL DESIGNS

Now begins a conversation, in which we must suppose that Mime utters words other than those we hear,—words which convey to us his real and hidden meaning. This hidden meaning is also equally obvious to Siegfried, after the bird's

warning, and also because the dragon's blood has touched his lips.

What we understand Mime to mean, then, is, that now that Siegfried has accomplished the deed, for which Mime brought him up, the dwarf intends to give him a potion, which will close his eyes in eternal sleep ; and Mime will then take possession of the Ring. The dwarf goes on to say, that he always hated the young hero and his race ; and he tells Siegfried that he prepared the fatal beverage while the youth was making his sword. With that very sword does Mime intend to cut off Siegfried's head, while he sleeps. He is very angry at Siegfried's interpretation of his words, and tries vainly to hide his real meaning from him. As he then offers the young man the concoction, which he has so lovingly prepared for him, a blow from Siegfried's sword stretches him on the ground, dead. From his retreat behind the rocks Alberich has observed the scene, and now utters a demoniacal laugh of joy at his brother's fate.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE BIRDS.

Siegfried drags Mime's corpse into the cavern ; and then blocks up the entrance completely with Fafner's body.

Now it is midday, and he is tired with the morning's work, and hot from the sun's burning rays: so he rests awhile in the shade of a tree. The rustling of the leaves is heard, as before; and Siegfried watches the birds as they hop from branch to branch, and fly after each other.

But he is so lonely. He has neither brother nor sister. His mother is dead, and his father was slain in combat. Now he longs for a companion, for someone to love, and he asks the birds to help him.

The answer he receives is, "The loveliest of women is sleeping on a high rock, surrounded by fire. If thou canst get through the flames and awaken her, Brünnhilde shall be thine."

Siegfried springs from his seat. A desperate longing, which he hardly understands, has taken possession of him; and he feels that he must get away out of the woods, on to the burning rock.

But the Bird warns him, that only he who knows no fear can pass through the flames. Siegfried exclaims that *he* does not know what fear is, but he hopes to learn it from Brünnhilde. So the Bird flies off to show him the way, and Siegfried follows after it.

The curtain falls.

ACT III.

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The Prelude.

The grand scene, with which this Act opens, is preceded by stormy music, in which the Ride *Motive* (37) predominates. This *Motive* then subsides into the tragic *Motives* of Destiny (23), and of the Gods' End (23a), together with the *Motives* of the Wanderer (47) and of Wotan's Spear (10).

A GOD'S INVOCATION TO NATURE.

Wanderer. Erda.

The curtain rises on a scene, over which rests the darkness of night. In a wild and lonely spot, at the foot of steep **rocks,** stands **Wanderer**; and amid storm, thunder, and lightning, he chants an invocation to the Goddess of the Earth, **Erda.** Out of the subterranean depths, where she has long slept, the god calls her up on to the earth's

surface. It is a powerful and mysterious invocation, in which predominates the *Motive* of Destiny (23), and which Erda is not able to withstand. The weird light, that surrounds her form, breaks the darkness of the night as she comes up through the ground. The *Motive* of Darkness (15) greets her appearance.

There is an unearthly grandeur and sublimity in this last scene between Wotan and Erda. For the last time the god seeks to gain knowledge and wisdom from the eternal secrets of Nature. But Erda has no more to teach him. He has received from her all that she can give; and her wisdom disappears before his will, since his will is in harmony with the course of destiny.

Wotan knows that the Gods' End is near at hand: but now he wishes for it. The thought of it no longer inspires him with terror, as it did when Erda first announced it to him. Joyfully the god yields up his dominion over the world to those who are "eternally young" (*i.e.* to Siegfried and Brünnhilde). Here a majestic movement, whose notes ascend the scale with quiet, but impressive, grandeur, forms the *Motive* of **Wotan's Bequest** (50).

Wotan knows, too, that though Siegfried is in

possession of the fatal Ring, the curse, with which it is laden, will lose much of its power in the hands of the fearless, noble hero, who rejoices in love and life, and is free from all envy and hatred.

And Wotan further tells Erda, that Brünnhilde, the daughter who has inherited her wisdom, will, after her awakening from the sleep in which she now lies, redeem the world from Alberich's curse.

The god then sends Erda down again, to sink into eternal sleep; and once more darkness reigns over everything.

WOTAN'S MEETING WITH THE HERO OF HIS DESIRE.

Siegfried. Gradually the moonlight brightens the scene, and a figure arrives at the foot of the rocks, whom we recognise as **Siegfried.** The bird has disappeared, and he must find the rest of the way by himself.

As he is about to ascend the rocks, however, the way is suddenly barred by the Wanderer, who steps forward to meet Siegfried, and to ask him, whither he is bound. Siegfried replies that he is

seeking a rock surrounded by fire, and at the top of which sleeps a woman, whom he will awaken.

Then, in answer to Wotan's questions, Siegfried tells him the story of his life, as we already know it. The god is well pleased with this valiant young hero of the Wälsung race. But an amused laugh, on his part, at the naïve recital of the youth, annoys Siegfried; and he bids Wotan be quiet, if he cannot show him the road. He even threatens to treat the Wanderer as he treated Mime, if he bars the way much longer. Siegfried does not know what he owes to the god, and is wholly unconscious of the love, which the latter bears to him. But his impatience to be gone, at length arouses Wotan's anger, and he forbids the young man to pursue his way. Siegfried indignantly asks, what right he has to do so.

"Fear the guardian of the rock," answers Wotan. "My power holds the maid in sleep; he who awakens and wins her will make me powerless for ever."

The Spear.

By the god's command the fire commences to burn around the rocks. At the sight of the **flames,** Siegfried again attempts to continue his way: but Wotan opposes him with his **spear,** saying, "This spear once

severed the sword which thou wieldest; and once more shall it break on the divine spear."

"My father's enemy," cries Siegfried; and, drawing his **sword,** he aims a blow at the extended spear, and cuts it in two. A fearful clap of thunder accompanies the breaking of the spear.

With the words, "Go thy way; I cannot hinder thee," Wotan disappears, accompanied by the *Motive* of the Gods' End (23a).

The way is now open for Siegfried: impetuously he dashes forward into the fire, through which he must pass to awaken his bride. His horn sounds merrily through the flames as he climbs the rock. Smoke and vapour then fill the air, and hide him, and the whole scene, from view.

THE DAWN OF LOVE.

Gradually the flames die down; and the smoke vanishes into thin air. Presently grows visible the scene on the mountain-top, which we saw in the last Act of the "Walküre."

Brünnhilde. All is bathed in sunshine. Perfect stillness reigns. **Brünnhilde** is sleeping under the pine tree, just as Wotan had left

her. From the orchestra resound the soft, sweet LOVE *MOTIVE* (14), and the peaceful SLUMBER *MOTIVE* (41).

Siegfried. Suddenly the young hero appears at the top of the mountain. The RHINE-GOLD *MOTIVE* (6) greets his appearance. He looks around him in astonishment; and spies the horse, **Grane,** asleep in the wood. He then catches sight of Brünnhilde's armour, glittering in the sun. Going up to her, he lifts the shield, and exclaims, "Ah! a man in armour." He then loosens the helmet, and removes it gently from her head, but starts back in bewilderment as the long locks of her hair are disclosed to view.

After gazing at her for some time, he stoops, and listens, to hear if she breathes; and, finding that she does, he endeavours to remove her armour: but at length has to cut it with his sword. As he lifts it off her form, he sees with amazement her long, white garment, and exclaims, "That is not a man."

Then, suddenly, he is seized with **fear** and trembling, and calling out,—"Mother, mother"—, he sinks down on to his knees, and, resting his forehead on Brünnhilde's bosom, remains motionless for some minutes. After a while he raises his

head with a sigh. But he cannot understand this terrible feeling, that has come over him, which makes his heart burn and his head swim, so that he can hardly stand. It must be fear! And he has learnt it at the sight of a sleeping woman

BRÜNNHILDE'S AWAKENING.

But the delicate *Motive* of Love (14) seems to soothe Siegfried's excitement; and he begins to wonder how he shall awaken the sleeping maid. She does not hear his call: but her half-opened lips tremble as the warm breath passes through them; and, with a sudden resolution to wake her thus, even if he dies for it, Siegfried presses his lips to hers, in a long, passionate kiss.

The *Motive* of Renunciation (8) recurs here, like a dark prophecy: but it dies away into the highest treble; and long, sustained chords on the harps and violins, which thrill the heart of the listener, form the *Motive* of **Brünnhilde's Awakening** (51). For suddenly she opens her eyes. Siegfried rises to his feet, and watches her in silence as she slowly raises herself from her couch, and gazes at the scene around her; at first in apparent bewilderment, and then with

growing ecstasy. The vibrating, brilliant chords of her *Motive* of Awakening (51) accompany also her silent greeting of the beautiful scene, which she sees around her. Then she raises her arms, with a cry of,—"Hail to thee, sun; hail to thee, light; hail to thee, shining day!" Now, turning at length to Siegfried, she asks,—"Who is the hero that awoke me?" Siegfried tells her his name, and she breaks out anew in a jubilant song of greeting to the gods, to the world, and to Siegfried. The sweet *Motive* of their **Love Greeting** (52) is re-echoed joyously by both.

Then Brünnhilde tells him that he it was whom she loved before he was born with a love which she could not name, which she only felt, but for which she had fought and set at defiance the god, who, nevertheless, had created this love in her heart.

But Siegfried cannot understand all this. He only feels the burning desire of the present moment; the passionate, human love, with which her beauty, and the sound of her voice, have inspired him. She, however, gently tries to distract his attention from herself, by pointing out to him her armour, and her horse, which is now also awake.

BRÜNNHILDE'S BEWILDERMENT.

But, as she suddenly realises that she no longer wears this armour, and that she is perfectly defenceless, her joy changes to feelings of sorrow and fear. In vain Siegfried tells her that he came through burning fire to her, and that no armour protected him from the flames; only the hot glow has left a burning passion in his breast.

As he tries to seize her, she springs up in terror; and, escaping from him, runs to the other side of the scene.

A virgin she had left Walhall. No god had ever approached her. Heroes had humbled themselves before her. And now, he who has awakened her has taken away her weapons, and brought shame and dishonour to her. She is Brünnhilde no longer!

Siegfried's entreaties to her to awake, and be his wife, only increase her anguish. All her divine wisdom seems to have deserted her, and darkness and bewilderment reign in its stead. In despair, she hides her face in her hands.

Siegfried gently removes them, and bids her see how brightly the day shines. "The day of my

distress,"—she cries, "Oh Siegfried, Siegfried, see my anguish. Immortal I was, and am; but immortal for thy salvation." These words of hers are accompanied by the soft and pure *Motive* of **Ideal Love** (53).

* * *

The first feelings of love in Brünnhilde's heart owed their origin, not to passion, but to compassion; to the sorrow she felt for the sufferings of Siegfried's parents. And the love she bears to their son is likewise pure and passionless: hers is the divine, ideal love, which has no element of destruction in it, and is, therefore, eternal. As opposed to this, Siegfried's love is the human passion, which, in its violence, sweeps all before it, and bears within itself the germ of death.

* * *

She implores him not to approach her, not to touch her, but to love the image of himself in her, and to leave her as she is. We again note a new *Motive*, accompanying, on the violins, the words in which she calls Siegfried, "**The World's Treasure**" (54).

Her passionate entreaties only make him love

her the more; and he cries, — "Be mine, be mine!"

"Thine was I always; thine shall always be," she answers.

"Be mine, then, now," he replies, and seizes her again.

LOVE'S VICTORY.

The passion in him gradually gains possession of her, too; and, by degrees, the immortal in her gives way to feelings as human, and as agitated, as Siegfried's own. As she gives herself wholly up to this change, and renounces her maidenhood and immortality, all the wild, tempestuous element of her Walküren nature surges up in her breast in a tide of passionate love and longing. Clasping her hero, she cries,—"Oh, Siegfried, dost thou not perceive how my glance burns, how my arm presses thee, and how the blood courses through my veins? Dost thou not feel the glowing fire? Dost thou not fear the wild, passionate woman?"

Siegfried, in the triumph of his love, has forgotten what fear is; and jubilantly they surrender themselves wholly to the influence of the exultant, overpowering feelings in their hearts, though this

passion bears in itself the element of destruction, both for themselves and for the gods.

Walhall's glory can fade, and the proud castle fall into dust. The eternal race of the gods may pass away, and the thread of destiny be broken. But Brünnhilde, in her happiness, surrenders herself willingly, and calls down the night of annihilation on all that she once held sacred. Siegfried is hers, her star, her god. She has awakened to be his wife. With an exulting cry of, — "Shining Love, laughing Death,"—they fall into each other's arms.

The joyous *Motive* of **Love's Ecstasy** (55) resounds triumphantly as the curtain falls.

The Main Ideas of Götterdämmerung.

Destiny sometimes breaks, even when woven by Fate.

Ambition, blind and ignorant, often betrays both itself and Love, though the latter's final triumph, through Self-sacrifice, is supreme.

Götterdämmerung.
(The Twilight of the Gods.)

* * *

The Overture.

The "dark close" of their "voluptuous day," is drawing nigh for the gods: but a new day is dawning for Wotan's human offspring, a day that brings to a climax the intrigue and deception first brought into the world by Alberich's curse, and through which Wotan's children must fight their way, in sorrow and suffering, till the end.

The orchestra opens the musical prelude to this last, tragic day of the drama, with the *Motive* of Brünnhilde's Awakening (51). These chords then disappear in the dark harmonies of Destiny (23), and of the Gods' End (23a).

ACT I.

* * *

THE THREAD OF DESTINY BREAKS.

The Norns.

THE curtain rises on the same scenery, on which it fell in the last Act of "Siegfried." Now it is night, and a red glow lights up the figures of the **three Norns,** or Fates, as they weave the threads of destiny into a **cord,** which they throw from one to the other. A minor movement weaves in and out on the stringed instruments, and is descriptive of their occupation.

Their mysterious song is a sort of echo of all that has happened, throughout the drama, from the beginning of all things, down to the approaching end of Walhall. The majestic *MOTIVE* of the **Burning of Walhall** (56) is a new and important one on this last day of the drama.

Among other well-known *MOTIVES*, that of the RING (7) predominates. To the *MOTIVE* of the CURSE (22) the thread breaks. The three Norns

rise, and, gathering up the ends of the cord, they bind themselves together with them, and sink down into the earth, never to reappear

A PERFECT PAIR.

Now gradually the day breaks.

The following *MOTIVES* prepare us for the entrance of Siegfried and Brünnhilde. On the horns resounds **Siegfried's Heroic** *MOTIVE* (57), a new theme, which is characteristic, in its stately chords, of his heroic manliness, while, at the same time, it is cheerful in its movement. The impetuous youth has developed into a stalwart hero, now in the prime of life. Free and joyous as ever, he has also assumed the dignity which becomes his manhood.

Brünnhilde's new *MOTIVE* (58), played by violins, is soft and sweet, and denotes also the change in her character, and the altered nature of her love. The wild Walküre maiden is transformed into a loving woman, whose whole heart and soul are bound up in Siegfried. To him she has given all she possessed,—the divine wisdom inherited from her mother, and the strength received from her father. And now she

has nothing left but her love for Siegfried, and her perfect confidence in him.

Brünnhilde. Siegfried. Now the pair enter, **Siegfried** in complete armour; **Brünnhilde** leading her horse, **Grane,** by the bridle.

FAREWELL!

The hero's restless, energetic nature fills him with a longing to get out into the world, and to achieve new deeds of prowess. It is human nature, that "man dreams of fame, while woman wakes to love." Siegfried, in this drama, represents the type of manhood.

The Ring. So he takes leave of Brünnhilde, who gives him, as a parting gift, her horse, Grane, in exchange for which she receives the **Nibelungen Ring;** as a pledge of Siegfried's love.

The **new** *Motive* **of their Love** (59) is sweet, cheerful, and full of hope. Their parting is full of the overflowing joy of those whose love is such a perfect bond, that they have no fear of anything coming between them to mar their happiness, or to shake their confidence in each other. To a lively movement,—resembling that of his delight

at getting out into the world, in the third part of the drama (46),—the hero departs, leading the horse down the rocks. The cheerful sound of his horn reaches Brünnhilde, who stands and waves farewell to him, to the *Motive* of their Love Greeting (52). In the interval that follows, after the curtain has fallen, the music of the orchestra describes to us Siegfried's descent, through the flames surrounding the rock, down on to the Rhine. Again we hear the *Song* of the Rhine-Maidens (6), and the *Motives* of the Gold (5), and of the Ring (7).

Now, on the brass instruments, resounds a new *Motive*, which is rather pompous, though fairly quick in its movement, and cheerful. It is the **Gibichung** *Motive* (60).

Gunther. Gutrune. Hagen.

The curtain now rises, and we have before us a large hall, in the **Gibichung Castle**, through the open door of which we look out on to the banks of the **Rhine**, and its waves. **Gunther** and **Gutrune**, the remaining representatives of the Gibichung race, are seated on high chairs of state. On a lower level in front of them sits **Hagen**, their half-brother; the son of the Nibelung, Alberich.

HAGEN'S INTRIGUES.

The GIBICHUNG *MOTIVE* (60) is a well-marked, decisive expression of the character of the race, which is, indeed, heroic, but marred by a greed for gain and desire of dominion;—attributes which show a similarity between this race and that of the Nibelungen. Contented self-possession characterises Gunther, who prides himself on being a worthy representative of the Gibichung house: but it is to the cunning Hagen that he looks for counsel and advice. The latter now tells him that there are still goodly possessions of which Gunther has not made himself master. The Gibichung race, in its pride and strength, is yet in danger of disappearing; Gunther has no wife, and Gutrune no husband. And Hagen tells them of the heroic pair, Siegfried and Brünnhilde, and insinuates that the latter would be the wife for Gunther, if Siegfried could be made to bring her to him. Hagen then reminds them of the magic potion which he can prepare, and which, if Siegfried partook of it at Gutrune's request, would cause him to fall in love with her, and to forget Brünnhilde entirely.

The *Motive* of the **Draught of Forgetfulness** (61),—this new, dark magic of the Nibelung's son,—somewhat resembles that of the Tarnhelm (17); the notes of both motives resounding low and ominously on the horns, in mysterious tones, like some subtle poison, slowly creeping in, and, almost unnoticed, completing its deadly work.

Siegfried. Now **Siegfried's** horn is heard again, resounding cheerfully as he crosses the Rhine, and approaches the Gibichung castle. The two men step out to meet him, with words of welcome. Gutrune, who has watched his arrival with visible excitement, now leaves the hall as Siegfried enters it. He gives into Hagen's care his horse, **Grane.**

Gunther then offers the hero his services, together with the use of his land and vassals.

Siegfried answers that *he* has inherited nothing but his own body; and his only possession is the Sword, which he made himself: but these he offers to Gunther, in return for his hospitality. Here arises, on the stringed instruments, the sweet, insinuating *Motive* of **Gunther's Friendship** (62).

The Tarnhelm. Hagen, standing behind Siegfried, reminds him of the Nibelungen

Treasure, of which it is rumoured that he is master. Siegfried had almost forgotten its existence: but, on Hagen's asking if he took nothing from it, Siegfried shows him the **Tarnhelm**, of which, for the first time, he now learns the power from Hagen.

THE DRAUGHT OF OBLIVION.

Siegfried also tells them of the Ring, which is now in the keeping of "the fairest of women."

Gutrune. Now **Gutrune** enters, bearing a drinking-horn, which she offers to the welcome guest. **Gutrune's** *Motive* (63) then resounds, in delicate, subtle tones, resembling those of her brother's *Motive* of Friendship (62). Siegfried takes the horn, and, thinking lovingly of Brünnhilde, he drinks to her this first **draught** that he has tasted since their separation. We hear the sweet melody of their Love Greeting (52), the grand *Motive* of Wotan's Bequest (50), and the delicate chords of Brünnhilde's Awakening (51). But, as he drinks, these sweet harmonies give place to the dark *Motive* of Forgetfulness (61), which in its turn, changes into Gutrune's *Motive* (63).

As Siegfried lets the horn fall, his glance lights on Gutrune: she looks away, to escape his passionate gaze. He seizes her hand, and asks, if she will refuse, as her brother did, to accept his devotion. Gutrune makes a gesture, which seems to signify that she is unworthy of his love; then she slowly turns, and goes out of the hall. Siegfried, without taking his eyes off her, as she disappears, asks Gunther if he has a wife; and learns, without the least surprise or emotion,—as if he had never heard her name before,—that it is Brünnhilde, whom Gunther covets: only the Gibichung hero cannot get to her, because of the fire surrounding her retreat.

Siegfried offers his services again to Gunther, to bring Brünnhilde to him; and desires, for a reward, Gutrune as his wife.

THE TIE OF FRIENDSHIP.

Gunther then proposes that they shall swear an oath of fidelity. The *Motive* of the Curse (22) belies his words, however. So Siegfried and Gunther take the oath of fidelity and brotherhood, over a horn filled with wine, into which they each let fall a drop of blood to seal their

oath. He who breaks the pledge of friendship, shall atone for it with his blood. The *Motive* of **Atonement** (64) breaks heavily into the livelier music accompanying their pledge.

After they have drunk, Hagen cuts the horn in two with his sword. He has not joined in the bond of the two men, who are already unconscious victims of the dark plot, which the Nibelung's son is preparing, in order to get the Ring into his own hands.

Gutrune.

Siegfried and Gunther then joyfully prepare for the journey across the Rhine. As they put off in their boat, **Gutrune** hurries out of her apartment, and asks whither they are going. "To fetch Brünnhilde,"—answers Hagen. "See how Siegfried is driven by the desire to win thee."

We hear the sweet, and very similar *Motives* of Love (14) and of Gutrune (63), as, with joyous step, she goes back to her apartment.

Hagen is left alone to keep watch and ward, and to glory in the approaching triumph of the Nibelungen over the Heroes, and in the growing dominion of the powers of darkness. The scene closes with the dark *Motives* of Alberich's Revenge (21) and Triumph (18).

A WARNING.

Brünnhilde. Waltraute. Now BRÜNNHILDE'S *MOTIVE* (58) resounds again; and the scene is changed into that in which Siegfried took leave of her. **Brünnhilde** is alone, and sunk in contemplation of the **Ring.** As sweet memories come over her, she passionately kisses this symbol of Siegfried's love. The music which accompanies her thoughts, —the *MOTIVES* of her AWAKENING (51), and of SIEGFRIED, THE WORLD'S TREASURE (54), — is interrupted by the stormy RIDE *MOTIVE* (37), a sound that at once attracts Brünnhilde's attention; and, looking up, she sees one of the Walküren come riding through the air, and descend on to the rock. It is her sister **Waltraute,** whom, as she alights, Brünnhilde greets joyfully, asking excitedly, what has caused Waltraute to break Wotan's command. Or has his anger softened towards her? For the punishment he has assigned to her has made her the happiest of mortals, since it has brought her Siegfried's love. Or perhaps Waltraute wishes to share her happiness, and has, therefore, dared to defy Wotan.

In haste and fear, strangely contrasting with her

sister's joy, Waltraute answers that the anguish which urged her to leave Walhall, will drive her thither again.

"What has happened to the eternal gods?"—cries Brünnhilde, now terrified also. And then she hears from Waltraute's lips, the grand, tragic description of the last assembling together of the gods in Walhall.

SORROW AND FEAR REIGN IN WALHALL.

Since he parted from Brünnhilde, Wotan had no longer sent the other Walküren out to battle: they rode aimlessly through the clouds, in fear and trembling. Wotan himself wandered solitarily and restlessly through the world. Once he came back to Walhall with his **Speer Broken** in his hand. Silently he motioned the heroes in Walhall to cut down the tree, from whose roots the spring of life and eternal wisdom flowed; and to pile the wood up around Walhall's halls. Here the *Motive* of the Burning of Walhall (56) is followed by that of the God's Distress (35). Then, calling together the gods, Wotan took his place among them. Now he sits thus, silent and motionless,

clasping the pieces of the broken spear in his hand. Astonishment and fear have petrified the gods.

Wotan has sent his **two ravens** into the world. "Should they again return to Walhall, with good news, the god would once more smile, for the last time through eternity."

The Walküren clasp his knees, and lie at his feet. Waltraute herself lay, weeping, on his breast; and Wotan, thinking of Brünnhilde, murmured,— "If she gave back the Ring to the daughters of the deep Rhine, the gods and the world would be freed from its terrible curse."

Waltraute heard these words, and this is what has brought her to Brünnhilde. She entreats her sister to throw into the waves the Ring, which is the cause of such universal misery. But little does Waltraute suspect the force of human passion, or what the Ring is to Brünnhilde. As the symbol of Siegfried's love, it is more to his bride than the delights of Walhall, more than the eternal glory of the gods, or their happiness. Not to save a world from destruction, will she renounce Love, and never shall they take the Ring from her.

BASE TREACHERY.

To these passionate declarations of Brünnhilde's the orchestra replies with the tragic *Motive* of Renunciation (8). For she will be compelled, by a force that she cannot resist—nay, by Siegfried himself,—to give up the Ring, to which she clings so resolutely.

Siegfried. But now, in the triumph of her love, she is blind to the curse, and rushes on to meet her doom. Even as Waltraute, in despair, leaves her, the **flames** begin to flicker up around the rocks, and **Siegfried's** horn is heard through them.

The Tarnhelm. In a transport of joy, Brünnhilde runs to meet him. But as he appears, in Gunther's form, with the **Tarnhelm** on his head, she starts back in terror and amazement; then, running to the other side of the scene, she stands motionless and speechless.

The dark *Motive* of Forgetfulness (61) fills the air, followed by the Gibichung *Motive* (60).

Siegfried, who leans on his shield, and observes her for some time, then commands her to follow

him; for she must be his wife, and he threatens to use force, if nothing else will compel her.

Astonishment and terror take possession of Brünnhilde. Who is the terrible being, that has come through the fire, and that threatens her thus? Is he human, or is he one of the dark powers of hell? Siegfried replies that Gunther is the hero to whom she will belong.

Then she breaks out in despairing accents,—"Wotan, thou fearful god! Woe is me; now I see the meaning of the punishment." The *Motive* of **Brünnhilde's Despair** (65) accompanies her words.

The Ring. As Siegfried now comes nearer to her, we hear the *Motive* of Alberich's Revenge (21). She threateningly holds up the **Ring**, and bids him fear that symbol: it shall protect her from shame and dishonour, for its possession lends her a supernatural strength. Siegfried, seizing her, tries to wrest it from her; and, as they struggle, Brünnhilde's despair gives her strength, by which for some time she is enabled to withstand Siegfried's efforts to get the Ring.

THE BETRAYAL OF LOVE.

We hear the *Motives* of Siegfried (54) and Brünnhilde (58), of the Walküren (38) and the *Motive* of the Curse (22), all raging one against another in wild disorder, till, to the dark *Motive* of Forgetfulness (61), Siegfried, at length, forces the Ring off her finger. Then the *Motive* of Alberich's Revenge (21) reminds us of the evil influence at work throughout the whole scene.

With a cry Brünnhilde sinks to the ground, and her *Motive* (58) resounds in sorrowful, minor tones.

Siegfried, however, holds up the Ring in triumph, and cries,—"Now thou art mine, Brünnhilde! Gunther's bride." She is vanquished and annihilated: her courage is broken, her strength gone; and black despair and misery reign in her breast, in place of the exultant happiness, which had been hers not long before. Trembling, and with bowed head, she almost staggers, as, in obedience to Siegfried's imperative gesture, she enters her apartment.

Then Siegfried draws his **Sword**, which shall separate him from his friend's bride, and follows her with a triumphant step as the curtain falls.

ACT II.

* * *

The Prelude.

The *Motive* of Alberich's Revenge (21) predominates here, together with that of the Ring (7); and a new dark phrase is introduced by a horn, and, with reference to its import in the drama, may be called the *Motive* of **Murder** (66).

THE NIBELUNG'S PLOTS OF REVENGE.

Hagen. Alberich. The curtain rises on a scene, which represents the **banks of the Rhine, outside the Gibichung Castle,** at the entrance to whose halls sits **Hagen** asleep. A stream of moonlight, falling on him, reveals a dark figure at his feet. It is the **Nibelung, Alberich,** who has come up in the night, to

incite to new deeds of intrigue and darkness the son, who has inherited his evil character, and into whom he has instilled feelings of hatred and desire for revenge. For, Alberich has brought up Hagen to avenge the wrongs done to himself by Wotan, and to restore the Ring to the Nibelung.

On receiving the assurance, that Siegfried, the master of the Ring, is already in Hagen's power, together with an oath from the latter, that he will procure the Ring for Alberich, the Nibelung sinks down through the ground, calling repeatedly to his son,—"Be true."

Siegfried. Gutrune. Now the day breaks, and **Siegfried** suddenly appears on the scene in his own form. The **Tarnhelm** is still on his head, but he removes it, and hangs it on his belt. He greets Hagen hastily. The latter slowly rises, and calls **Gutrune,** who now enters. Siegfried then relates to her and Hagen, how he won Brünnhilde for Gunther, and how the pair are following him in a ship across the Rhine.

Gutrune's slight touch of jealousy at Siegfried's having wooed Brünnhilde for Gunther is soon allayed; and joyfully she goes to prepare for the marriage ceremony, Siegfried following her.

Gunther's Vassals.

Hagen then calls together the **Gibichung Vassals,** with a cry of, — "Danger is near; weapons through the land." Armed men hurry in from all sides, to learn what danger threatens the Gibichung race.

Hagen stands like an evil spirit, throwing a dark shadow over the approaching festivities. All his plans are laid to ruin Siegfried. As he tells the men to prepare for the wedding, he adds that they must be ready to avenge any wrong, that might be offered to the bride of their lord.

Gunther. Brünnhilde.

The men's laughter at Hagen's tragic solemnity, on even such a joyful occasion as this, only ceases as the boat, containing **Gunther** and **Brünnhilde,** is seen approaching. Some of them run, and assist the bridal pair to descend, while the others give them a noisy welcome.

BRÜNNHILDE'S PASSION.

Siegfried. Gutrune.

But all joy is soon to come to an end. As Gunther, leading Brünnhilde by the hand, advances towards the entrance to the castle, **Siegfried** and **Gutrune** come out to meet them. Gunther greets them, calling them by their names. As she hears that of Siegfried,

Brünnhilde, who until now has followed Gunther with slow step and bowed head, suddenly looks up. Perceiving Siegfried, she takes a quick step forward; then, however, retreats as suddenly, and stands motionless, her eyes fixed on him.

A murmur of astonishment is heard from those surrounding them. Siegfried, however, calmly stepping towards her, asks —"What is it that troubles Brünnhilde?"

With an effort she gasps,—"Siegfried! . . . here! . . . Gutrune?"

"Gunther's mild sister wedded to me, as thou to Gunther," answers the hero.

"I to Gunther! . . . thou liest," she cries; and then, as she sways, and nearly falls, Siegfried, who stands nearest to her, supports her. Leaning wearily against him, she murmurs,—"Siegfried knows me not!"

The Ring.

But Siegfried gives her over to Gunther, and, in doing so, raises the finger, on which he wears the **Ring**. As she suddenly sees this, Brünnhilde, in the greatest agitation, exhorts Gunther to demand from Siegfried the Ring, which he, Gunther, took from her, and with which he forced her to become his wife.

The greatest excitement prevails amidst the men

and women watching the scene. Now Hagen, stepping in among the men, bids them take note of what Brünnhilde says.

The whole scene, which is the work of the Nibelung, is supported by the *Motives* of Alberich's Revenge (21) and Triumph (18). The Ring and Gold *Motives* (7, 5) also recur.

Meanwhile Gunther, in great confusion, declares that he does not know the Ring, and that he gave no Ring to Siegfried. Then Brünnhilde, with irrepressible anger, accuses Siegfried of having stolen it from her. But the hero answers, that from no woman did he get the Ring: he remembers well, that it was the reward of his victory over the Dragon.

Hagen, now intervening, tells the bewildered Brünnhilde, that, if she really recognises the Ring, then Siegfried won it through deceit, which he shall repent. But Brünnhilde, almost beside herself with sorrow and anger. cries,—to the *Motive* of Despair (65),—"Deception! shameful deception, and treachery, such as never before was avenged." Then, with sudden calm, to the pathetic *Motive* of her Justification (40), she appeals to the gods, who have created for her sorrow and shame, such as never were suffered before, to inspire her with

anger and vengeance, that cannot be averted; and to teach her to break her heart, that she may destroy him, who has deceived her thus.

In vain Gunther tries to subdue her passion. She cries, that not to him, but to Siegfried, has she been wedded: adding sorrowfully, to the *Motive* of Renunciation (8),—"He took my love and happiness from me."

SIEGFRIED'S OATH.

Siegfried denies the charge of disloyalty to Gunther and Gutrune; and the brother and sister urge him to prove the falseness of Brünnhilde's accusation, while the men demand from him an oath, that he is blameless. Hagen offers his **spear,** on which Siegfried swears, saying,—"Where death can o'ertake me, there shalt thou strike me, if the woman there spoke true." These words are significantly accompanied by the *Motive* of Murder (66). Brünnhilde, who has listened to this with growing indignation, now rushes forward, pushes Siegfried's hand off the spear, and, seizing the point in her own, she swears, to the same dark *Motive*, that his oath is false; and she blesses the spear, that it may avenge her wrongs.

Siegfried, in anger, tells Gunther that what Brünnhilde has sworn is a shameful lie. The horrified crowd does not know what to believe, or which of them is forsworn: however, Siegfried endeavours to calm their indignation, and soon succeeds. At the same time, he whispers to Gunther, that probably the Tarnhelm had not sufficiently covered him; and that Brünnhilde is angry, because he won her for Gunther.

Now, with his usual vivacity, Siegfried calls the people together, and bids them rejoice with him over his wedding. His hilarity soon spreads amid the crowd; and, when he puts his arm round Gutrune, and the pair enter the hall with light step and cheerful mien, the crowd joyfully follows after them.

HAGEN'S TRIUMPH.

Meanwhile Gunther, overcome by shame and anger, has sunk down on to the ground, and hidden his face in his hands. Hagen stands motionless, watching Brünnhilde, who, in her perplexity, is trying to fathom this terrible problem, in face of which all her wisdom is as nothing.

The memory of Siegfried's affection resounds

pathetically in the *Motive* of their Love (59); but is soon succeeded by the dark *Motives* of Murder (66) and Despair (65), as Brünnhilde asks herself,—"What evil craft lies hidden here?" She cannot guess what magic has wrought such a terrible change in Siegfried; and, in her anguish, she turns to the only means left to her of putting an end to it,—Revenge. But who will offer her a sword, with which to sever the ties that still bind her to Siegfried?

Now Hagen's time has come, and, stepping up to her, he offers his **spear,** to avenge her wrongs. Here a new phrase, played by the bassoons, cellos, and double-basses,—the *Motive* of **Conspiracy** (67),—occurs. This *Motive*, whose origin we can trace in that of Despair (65), together with that of Murder (66), predominates till the end of this dark scene.

Brünnhilde laughs bitterly at the idea of Hagen's avenging her wrongs: a single glance of Siegfried's eagle eye, which she knows so well, would put to flight all Hagen's valour. Even though the hero has sworn a false oath on Hagen's weapon, his victorious strength would protect him from all danger. For, Brünnhilde has given to Siegfried all the power she once possessed as Wotan's

daughter; and with her magic has made him invulnerable. "Oh! ingratitude! what a shameful reward!" she cries.

"So, then, no weapon can hurt him?" asks Hagen. "Not in battle," she answers; "for I know that he never yields, or, fleeing, turns his back to the enemy." Then, with sudden resolution, she tells Hagen, that, if he strikes Siegfried in the back, the blow will be fatal. This secret Brünnhilde reveals to the *Motive* of Alberich's Revenge (21). Unwittingly she, too, has become a tool in the hands of the Nibelung's son; and thus unconsciously furthers his designs against herself and the gods, besides completing Siegfried's ruin

PLOT FOR THE HERO'S DEATH.

Triumphantly Hagen now rouses Gunther, who groans, and laments his utter disgrace. Brünnhilde, too, scornfully reproaches him with cowardice and falseness, saying that he hid himself behind Siegfried, in order that the latter might win for him the prize; and that the Gibichung Race has, indeed, sunk low to produce such faint-hearted creatures. Her words drive Gunther to despair; and he appeals to Hagen to help him. But the

latter answers, that nothing will help him except Siegfried's death. Gunther reminds him of the bond of brotherhood existing between them. "Which bond he broke," replies Hagen.

"Did he betray me?" asks Gunther.

"He did betray thee," answered Brünnhilde; "but me have ye all betrayed. Were I avenged, all the blood in the world would not expiate your crime. But the death of one shall suffice for all; Siegfried shall fall, as atonement for himself and for you."

Hagen tells Gunther, also, of the power of the Nibelungen Ring, now in Siegfried's possession. But still Gunther hesitates, thinking of Gutrune. At the mention of this name, however, a sudden light breaks in on Brünnhilde's mind. Now she sees what magic has bewitched Siegfried. It is Gutrune, who has robbed her of his love: may anguish overtake her!

Hagen now proposes to kill Siegfried on the morrow, during the hunt, when Gutrune will not be present; and the three unanimously cry,—"So shall it be: Siegfried shall fall." Thus Brünnhilde and Gunther will be revenged for the wrong done to them by the hero, and Hagen will achieve his object, and become master of the Ring.

While Brünnhilde calls upon Wotan to listen to their oath of vengeance, Hagen invokes Alberich, and bids him prepare for the triumph of the Nibelungen. Again the demoniacal *Motives* of Murder (66) and of Conspiracy (67) mingle with the sweet **wedding music,** as Gutrune and Siegfried are borne forth from the hall, in joyful procession, surrounded by the delighted crowd. Gunther takes Brünnhilde's hand, to follow them, and Hagen is left alone as the curtain falls.

ACT III.

* * *

The Prelude.

In the prelude to this last Act of the drama, we hear Siegfried's and Hagen's horns, followed by the well-known melodies of the Rhinegold (2, 6).

WARNING VOICES.

As the curtain rises the freshness and brightness of the scene remind us of the opening of the drama, when the beauty of nature was not clouded by the tragedy of human passion and sin.

Rhine-daughters. The scene is placed on the **banks of the Rhine,** from whose waves resounds, as of old, the song of the **three Rhine-daughters,** as they swim on the surface of the waters, and sing always of their lost Gold.

Siegfried. Now **Siegfried's** horn is heard; and they all three disappear under the

waves as he enters. He is in search of the bear, which he is hunting, and of which he has lost all trace. Now his attention is suddenly attracted by the song of the three maidens as they reappear above the waves, and laughingly offer to give him what he is looking for, in exchange for the **Ring** on his finger. But such an exchange does not seem desirable to Siegfried; and only after a good deal of mocking laughter on the part of the lively maidens at his unwillingness to part with it does Siegfried tell them they may have the Ring. But now, in more earnest tones, they bid him keep it, and learn what misfortune attaches to the possession of it.

"Now sing what ye know," replies Siegfried.

They then tell him of the **curse,** and counsel him to avoid it. To the *Motive* of the Gods' End (23a), they warn him of the fate awaiting him, if he does not give the Ring back to the Rhine.

But if Siegfried was deaf to their mockery, he is much more so to their threats, and laughs at their warning. He does not know what fear is; and cares as little for his life as for the **stone,** which, while saying these words, he picks up and throws far from him.

The maidens see that their warning has no effect on the hero, who knows not what a high gift he has thrown away,—viz., Brünnhilde's love. Accompanying their words, we hear BRÜNNHILDE'S *MOTIVE* (58). Nor will he now give up a Ring, that, retained, will be the cause of his death. So, bidding him farewell, the Rhine-daughters swim away singing, to warn Brünnhilde of the Curse. From her they hope for a better hearing.

Hagen. Gunther.

Now hunting-horns resound, to which Siegfried responds cheerily on his own. But the *MOTIVE* of the CURSE (22) breaks in on these lively strains. Then Hagen's voice is heard, hailing Siegfried; and the next moment a crowd of huntsmen, among whom are **Gunther** and **Hagen,** come down to where Siegfried stands.

They all listen with astonishment to the narration of his adventure with the Rhine-daughters. But Gunther starts, and looks meaningly at Hagen, as he hears of their warning to Siegfried, and their dark prophecy of his death. Hagen, however, stands unmoved.

STORY OF SIEGFRIED'S YOUTH.

Now Siegfried complains of thirst; and a drinking-horn is handed to him, the contents of which he first offers to Gunther, who sighs at his friend's careless vivacity. Hagen then asks Siegfried, if he does not understand the song of the birds. Siegfried, thinking to divert Gunther's thoughts into a brighter channel, offers to tell them the story of his youth.

During his narration of the events,—which we already know from the third Play of the Drama, that bears his name,—we recognise the principal *Motives* of "Siegfried." The rhythmic *Motive* of the Nibelungen (16), that of Mime's Complaint (45), and the *Motive* of the Dragon (20), all recur; and over and above all is heard, during his repetition of the Bird's Song, the rustling of the leaves in the Forest Music.

As he relates the fate that overtook Mime, Hagen's demoniacal laugh reminds us of the mirth, with which Alberich witnessed his brother's death.

Now, ere Siegfried continues, Hagen drops into his horn the juice of some herb; and, in the

orchestra, there is an echo of the *Motive* of Forgetfulness (61), which formerly accompanied the Draught of Oblivion.

Hagen then offers Siegfried this draught "to refresh his memory." As the hero drinks, the remembrance of his love for Brünnhilde awakes to the *Motive* of their Love (59). Now, too, as he continues his narration, the Fire *Motive* (42), mingled with the Slumber *Motive* (41), accompanies his song; and leads on to the majestic *Motive* of Wotan's Bequest (50), and to the triumphant chords of Brünnhilde's Awakening (51), interrupted, however, by the *Motive* of Conspiracy (67). With growing excitement, and apparently forgetful of his audience, Siegfried relates how he found, and awakened, Brünnhilde. Gunther listens with increasing astonishment and horror.

THE HERO'S DEATH.

Now the *Motive* of the Curse resounds (22), and two **ravens** fly over Siegfried's head. As the hero jumps up, and looks after them, he turns his back to Hagen; and the latter gives him a mortal blow with his **spear,** before

Gunther, who has rushed forward, can prevent him.

Siegfried turns, and, with a last, strong effort, raises his shield to crush Hagen : but his strength suddenly fails him, and, letting the shield drop, he falls backwards on to it. The horrified crowd looks on, speechless. Then, with the words, to the *Motive* of Atonement (64), "I avenged his false oath,"—Hagen turns, and goes slowly away up the hill.

Meanwhile, twilight has gradually stolen over the scene. The dying Siegfried again opens his eyes, and utters Brünnhilde's name. The present and the near past have faded from his memory. In spirit he is again bending over the form of the sleeping Walküre. The full-toned chords of her Awakening (51), with their delicate harp accompaniment, resound in his ears ; and his call to her in his own *Motive* (39), to awake from the sleep, in which he still imagines her to be, is full of indescribable pathos. Then to the *Motive* of their Love Greeting (52), he, in thought, again arouses her from slumber. In the light of those eyes, now eternally open for him ; with the air fanning his cheek, like the warm breath from her lips, he feels again Love's Ecstasy. To its

Motive (55), he once more calls the beloved name, and then sinks lifeless to the ground.

IN MEMORIAM.

A moment of solemn silence ensues. Then we hear the first low notes of, perhaps, the most sublime music of the drama, — **Siegfried's Funeral March.**

The *Motives* of the Wälsung Race (27, 28, 30, and 31), again resound in grand, triumphal procession, reaching their crowning-point in the *Motive* of the Sword (25). The Siegfried *Motive* (39) is heard, at first plaintively; but soon with the cheerful vivacity, that characterised the hero himself. The *Theme* of his Heroism (57) resounds in full, magnificent chords, that rise high above the tragic music, which recalls to our memory the sorrows and sufferings of this mighty Wälsung Race, sprung from a divine ancestry, whose last scion, unfettered by the laws of the gods, and without their protection, has worked out his own destiny: but who, though he has fallen a victim to the curse of the Ring, has yet died with a pure love in his heart, and Brünnhilde's name on his lips.

* * *

And now it is BRÜNNHILDE'S *MOTIVE* (58) that leads us on to the very last scene of the drama.

THE RETURN FROM THE CHASE.

It is night in the **Gibichung Halls**; and, through the open door, we see the **Rhine** in the moonlight.

Gutrune. **Gutrune** is watching and listening anxiously for Siegfried's return. The *MOTIVE* of that HERO (57) resounds in a sad minor. Gutrune's heart is full of dark forebodings and fears. She has seen a woman's form glide to the water's edge. Was it that of Brünnhilde, whom she dreads? She calls the latter: but finds her apartment empty. Ominous silence reigns over all. In vain she strains her ears to catch the sounds of Siegfried's horn.

Hagen. Gunther. Now, however, sounds are heard. But they are **Hagen's** voice, accompanied by the *MOTIVES* of CONSPIRACY (67) and of ALBERICH'S REVENGE (21).

As the men enter, Gutrune sees the **body of the dead hero** being brought in; and, with a wild shriek, falls fainting on to it. On recovering,

she answers Gunther's compassionate caresses with wailing and lamentations.

The Ring.

Meanwhile Hagen, indifferent to Gutrune's sorrow, and to Gunther's angry reproaches, claims the Ring on Siegfried's finger; and is about to take it, when Gunther intervenes. The two men then draw their swords and fight, till a thrust from Hagen's weapon brings Gunther to the ground, mortally wounded. Now Hagen again steps forward to take the Ring, when the dead hero's hand is raised with a threatening gesture, which makes Hagen retreat in dismay, and causes general terror.

The scene is, indeed, an impressive one. The dark hall, filled with men in hunting garb, and women in long, white robes, presents a weird aspect in the flickering, uncertain light of the torches, which they carry. They stand in disordered groups around the body of the dead hero, which has been placed in the centre of the hall, and at the side of which Gutrune crouches, hiding her face in her hands. A little apart from the rest, Hagen leans on his shield in an attitude of defiance, with an expression of diabolical hatred on his dark countenance. The doorway of the hall is open; and the calm beauty of the night

where, in the moonlight, all seems to sleep, forms a vivid contrast to the dark tragedy of the scene within.

Brünnhilde. From this peaceful scene without, **Brünnhilde** now enters the hall, to the *MOTIVES* of DESTINY (23) and of the GODS' END (23a). With a quiet, dignified step she passes through the groups of terrified men and women, and bids them cease their wailings, which are like those of children crying for their mother; but are not an expression of sorrow befitting the hero, for whom they are uttered. Gutrune tries to prevent her approaching the body: but Brünnhilde pityingly silences her rival's reproaches. She was the hero's own true wife, before he ever saw Gutrune. And now the latter recognises that this is true; and that only through Hagen's magic had she been able to bind Siegfried to herself; and bitterly she curses the Nibelung's son, who is the cause of all this misery. Then, leaving Siegfried's body, she falls on to that of her brother, and remains thus, motionless, till the end. We hear GUTRUNE'S *MOTIVE* (63) for the last time.

BRÜNNHILDE'S TRIUMPH OVER PASSION.

Now Brünnhilde prepares for the last service of love, that she can render to Siegfried. She bids the men build up a **funeral pyre** on the banks of the Rhine. To share this final honour with Siegfried, she also will be burnt with his body.

She then takes a last, long look at the face of the dead. He was the noblest of men, who, nevertheless, had betrayed the only woman whom he really loved.

But now the whole mystery has been revealed to her. As, to the noble *Motive* of Walhall (9), she invokes the divine powers to look down on her sorrow, she recognises that Siegfried's bravest deed, so desired by Wotan,—the acquisition of the Ring,—was the cause of the hero's ruin. She sees, too, that only through the sorrow occasioned by his treachery, has she herself regained the wisdom, which she had renounced so willingly for human love. Now that same love, purified from all that is sensual and selfish in human passion, has become a

divine love, and an intense sympathy for suffering humanity.

Through her victory over the sorrow and suffering, which she has had to bear,—the weight of which would have crushed a less noble nature,—Brünnhilde is enabled to accomplish the supreme desire of the god; to wit, the redemption of the world from the curse, beneath which it groans, by the voluntary sacrifice of herself. In the consciousness of this she seems exalted even above the gods. As she sends **Wotan's ravens** home to him, with a message of peace, this perfect calm also reigns in her own soul, now freed from all earthly passion.

The predominant *Motives* of this scene, are those of the Curse (22), of the Gold (6), of the Ring (7), of Destiny (23), and of the Gods' End (23a).

The Ring. Taking the **Ring** from Siegfried's finger, Brünnhilde now places it on her own. The fire, which consumes her body, will purify the Ring from the curse, and out of her ashes, the Rhine-daughters will receive back their Gold, which has caused such woe in the world.

BRÜNNHILDE'S BEQUEST TO THE WORLD.

Then she throws a lighted torch on to the funeral pyre, with the words,—"Thus do I set on fire Walhall's splendid halls. But ye who remain of the living race, hear what I proclaim to you. When ye see Siegfried and Brünnhilde consumed by the flames, and the Rhine-daughters take back the Ring into the water's depths, look northwards through the night, and know that the red glow in the heavens, betokens Walhall's end.—The race of gods passed away like a breath : without a ruler I leave the world behind, but I bequeath to it the treasure of my divine wisdom ;—neither goods, nor gold ; neither divine glory, nor lordly state . . . sublime in sorrow and in joy, let Love reign alone!"

* * *

These words are not sung in the drama, as Wagner has composed no music for them. Wagner's own explanation of this is found in his *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, Band vi. p. 256 (2nd ed.). He says "Their meaning

is already expressed with the greatest distinctness, in the effect produced by the musical sounds of the drama." We must also remember, that, in the first instance, Wagner wrote the Nibelungen Ring as a poem, in which form it was originally published, and for which he composed the music at a later period.

* * *

LOVE'S REDEMPTION.

Grane. The horse, **Grane,** is then brought to Brünnhilde, and once more the wild WALKÜREN *MOTIVE* (38) is heard. But it gives place to a calm, sweet melody,—played by the flutes and violins, with a harp accompaniment,—which rises high above all other conflicting elements, and seems like a message of perfect peace; a full, deep breath of eternal freedom. It is the *MOTIVE* of **Love's Redemption** (68).

The Rhine-daughters. Hagen. Now Brünnhilde springs on to her horse with the well-known WALKÜREN CRY (33), and gallops into the flames, calling Siegfried's name. The **flames** tower up, high above the funeral pyre, and seem as if they

would fill the whole space; but after a short time, they die down again. As the smoke clears away, those who are looking on see that the **waters of the Rhine** have covered the ashes of the pyre. The **Rhine-daughters** rise to the surface of the waves. As he perceives them, **Hagen,** who all this time has watched, and listened to, Brünnhilde, with increasing agitation, now springs into the water with a cry of,—"Back from the Ring."

The Ring.

The *Motive* of the Curse (22) resounds for the last time. Hagen is seized by two of the Rhine-daughters, and dragged down to the bottom of the river, while the third holds the **Ring** triumphantly aloft, to the accompaniment of the same joyous music, that we heard in the beginning of "Rheingold." The magnificent Walhall *Theme* (9) resounds for the last time, as the red glow in the sky announces the **end of the gods.** With the *Motive* of the Gods' End (23a) and Siegfried's *Motive* (39), the old world, so heavily laden with the curse of passion and sin, passes away. Above the waves, wherein the fatal Ring again rests, gleams the dawn of a purer, brighter day; and the reign of Love begins, as the *Motive*

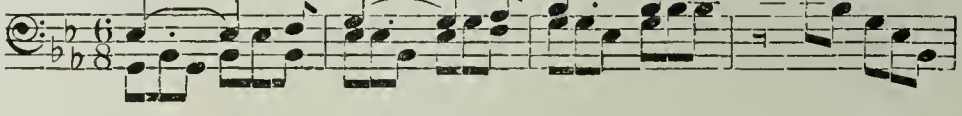
of LOVE'S REDEMPTION (68) floats higher and higher, till the ethereal tones fade away into silence, leaving in the heart of the listener a sublime sense of perfect peace.

The

Principal Motives.

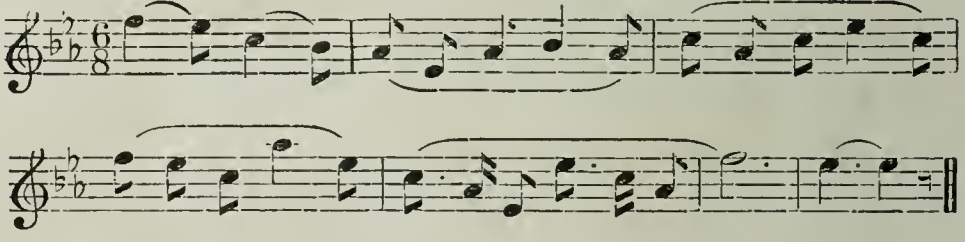
Primeval Element.

(1)



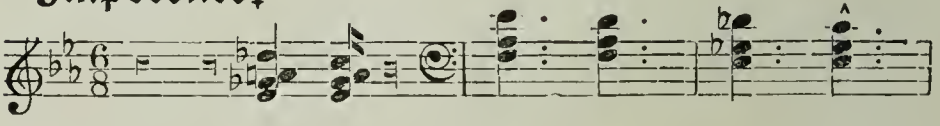
The Rhine Daughters.

(2)



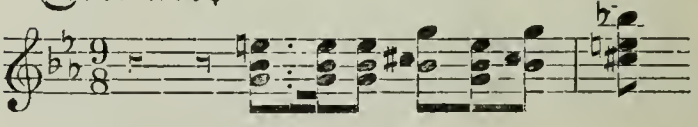
Impotence.

(3)



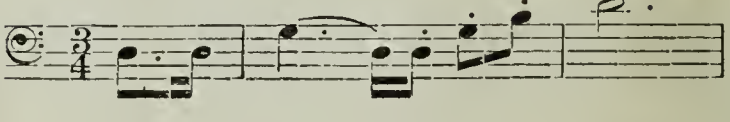
Menace.

(4)



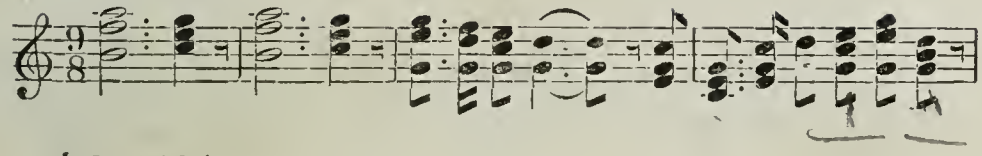
The Gold.

(5)



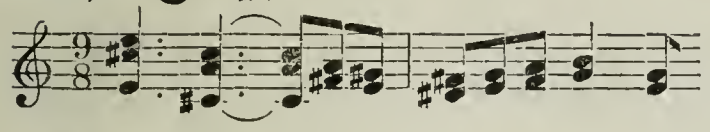
Rhinegold.

(6)



The Ring.

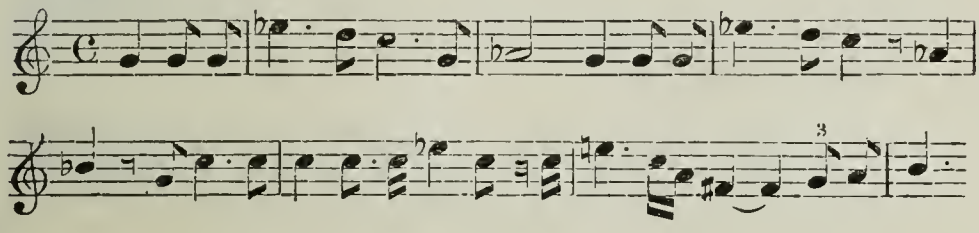
(7)



etc

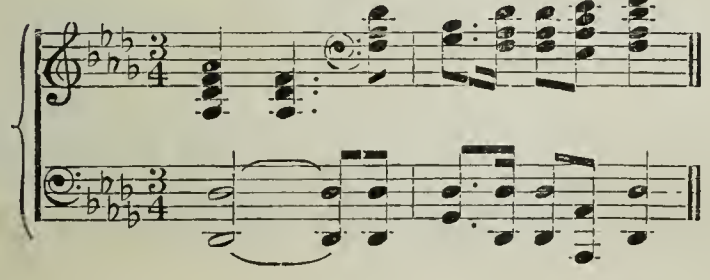
Renunciation.

(8)



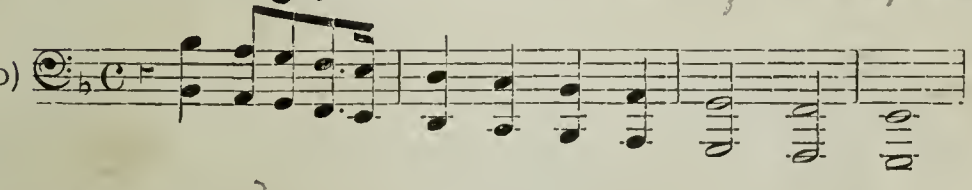
Walhall (also Wotan).

(9)



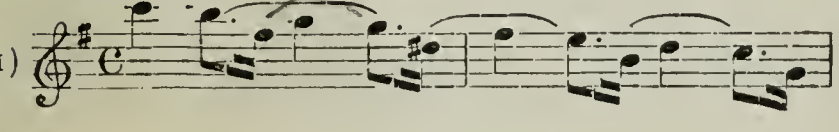
Wotan's Spear. Motive of Compact

(10)



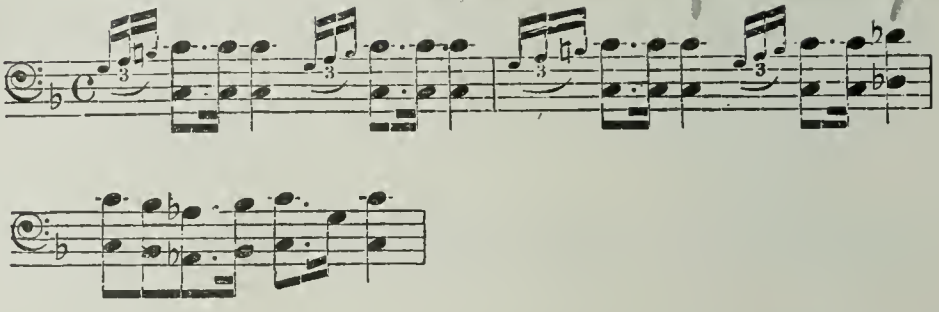
Flight.

(11)



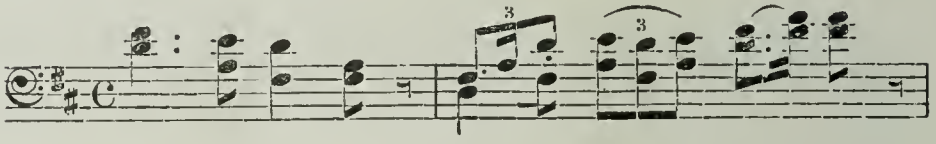
The Giants.

(12)



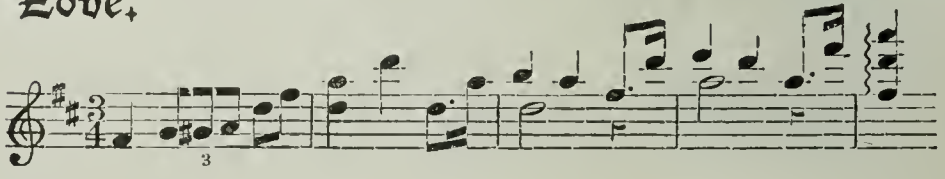
Golden Apples.

(13)



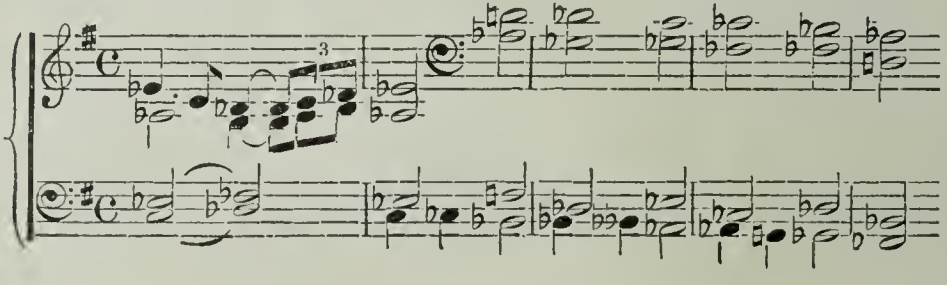
Love.

(14)



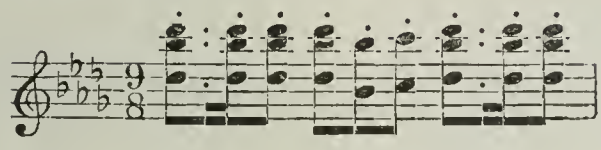
Darkness.

(15)



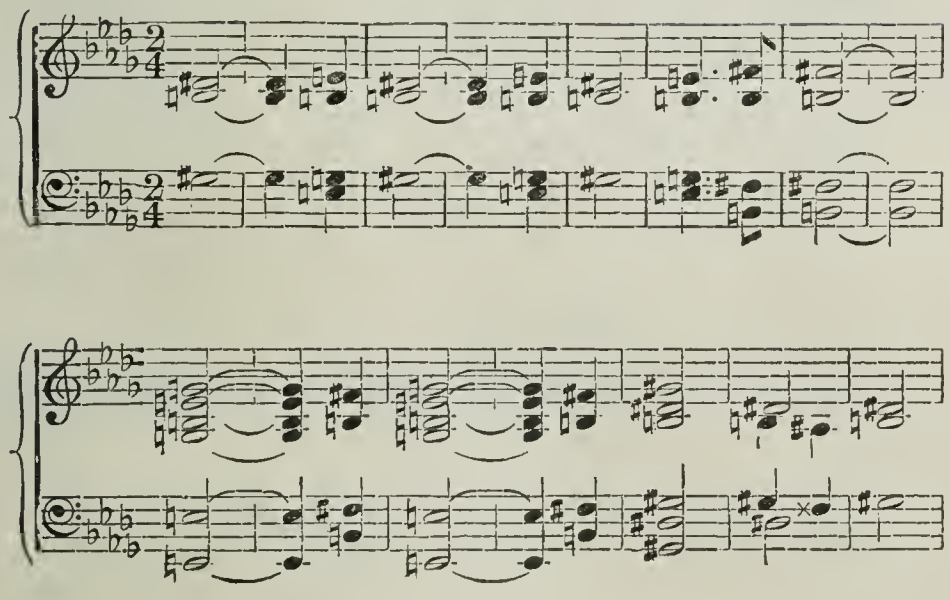
The Nibelungen.

(16)



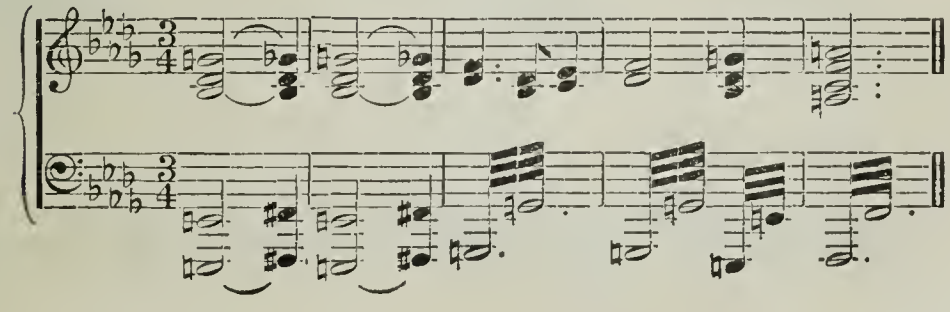
The Tarnhelm.

(17)



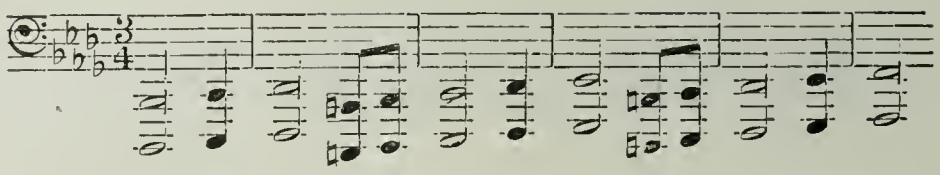
Alberich's Triumph.

(18)



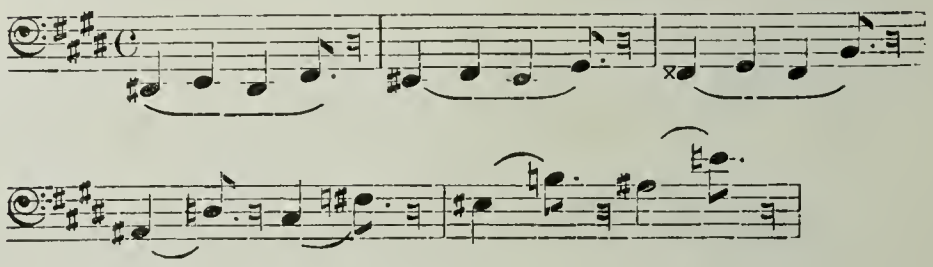
The Treasure.

(19)



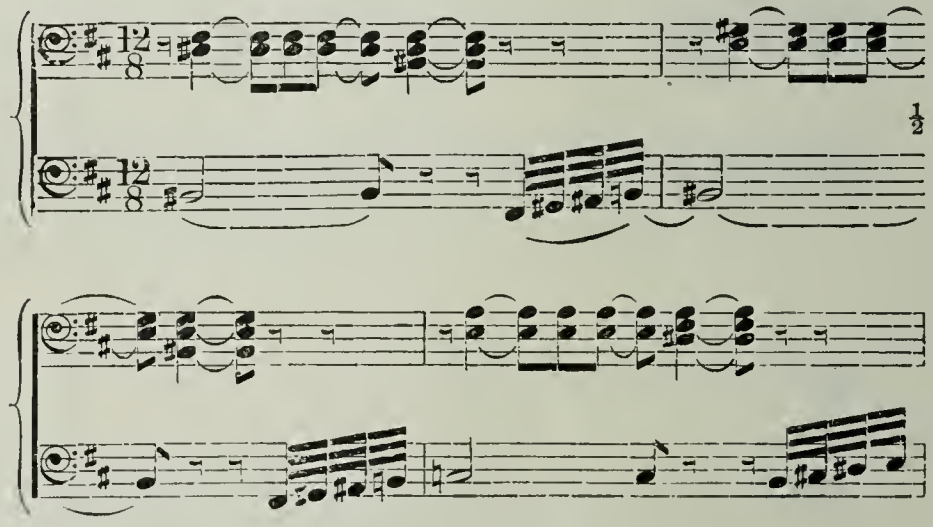
The Dragon.

(20)



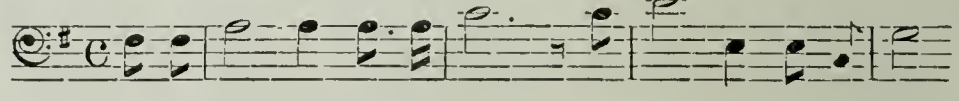
Alberich's Revenge.

(21)



The Curse.

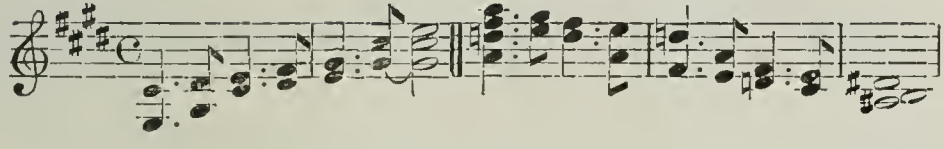
(22)



Destiny.

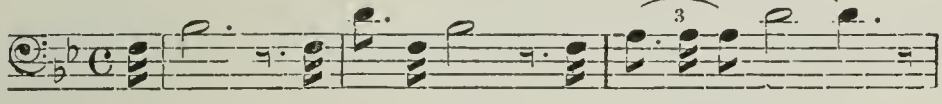
(23a) The Passing away of the Gods.

(23)



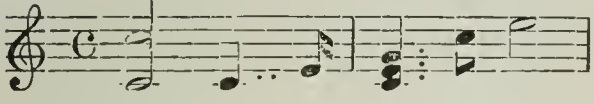
Storm.

(24)



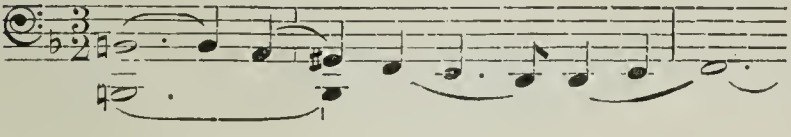
The Sword.

(25)



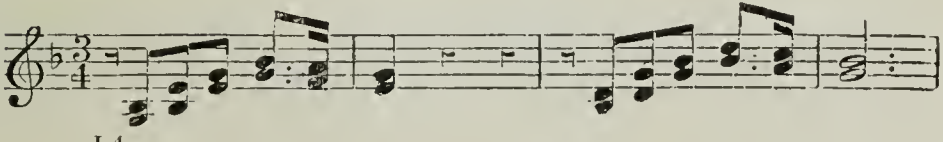
The Tired Siegmund.

(26)



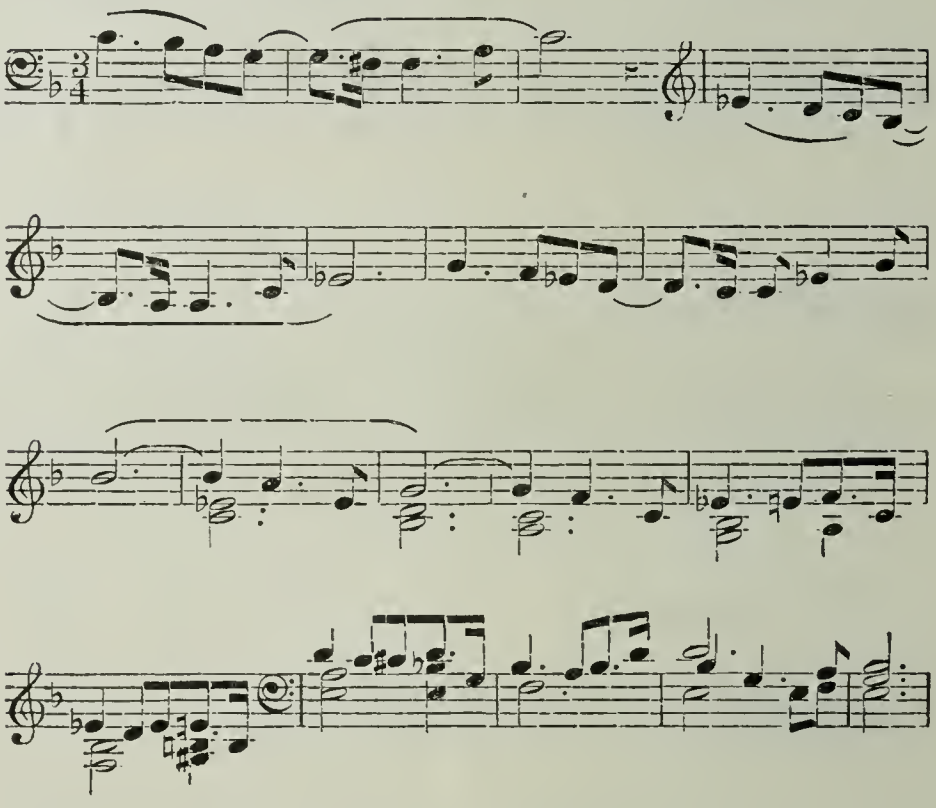
Sieglinde's Compassion.

(27)



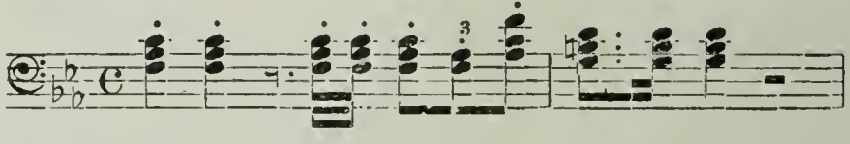
Siegmund's and Sieglinde's Love.

(28)



Hunding.

(29)



Siegmund's and Sieglinde's Sorrow in Love.

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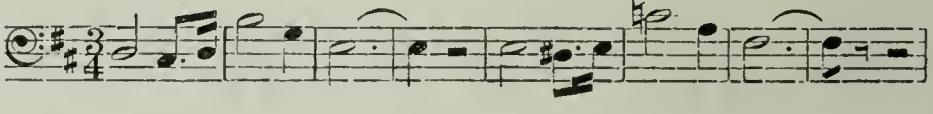

The Wälsung Race.

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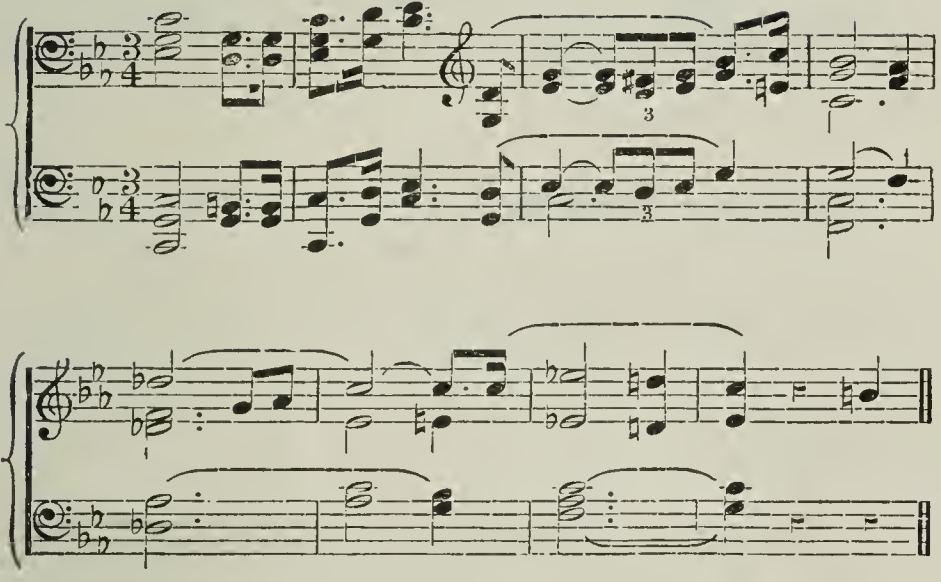

Siegmund's Love Song.

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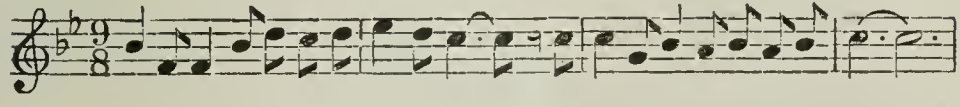

The Cry of the Walküren.

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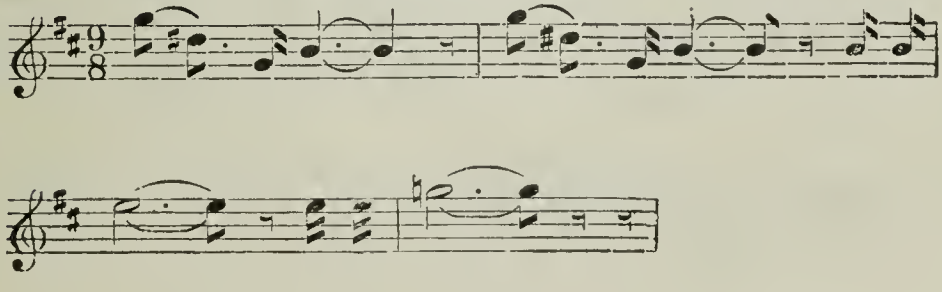

Wotan's Anger.

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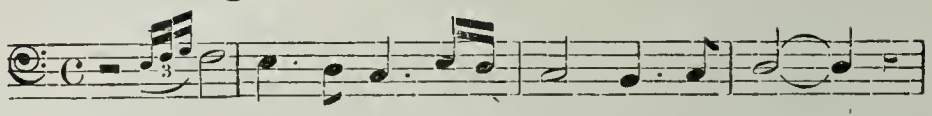

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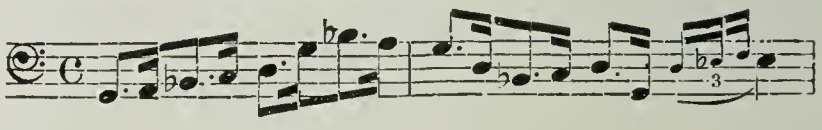

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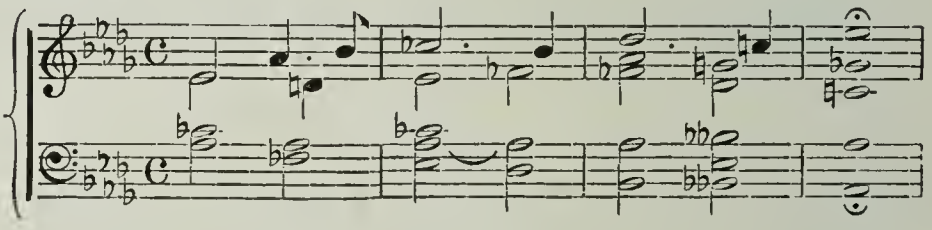

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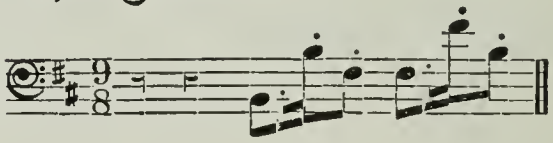

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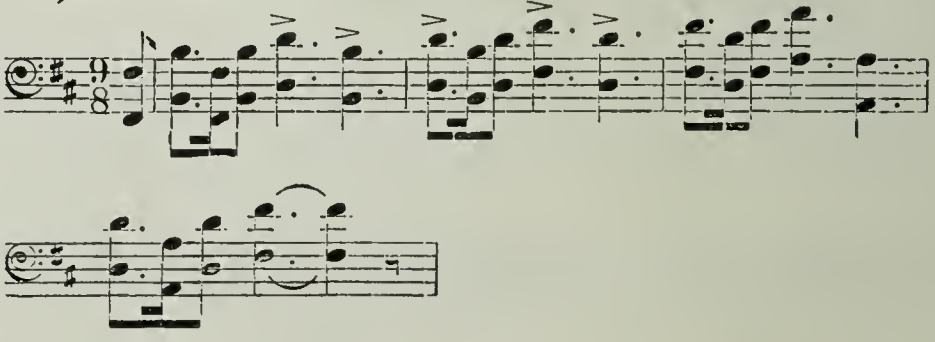

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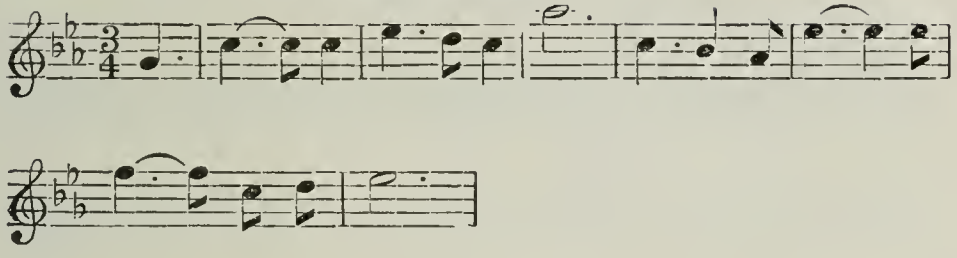

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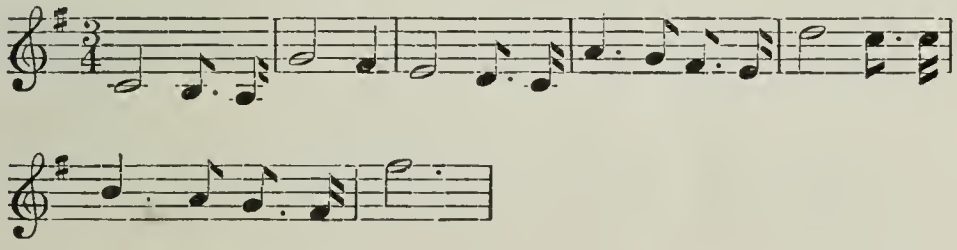

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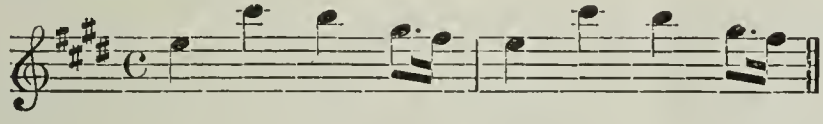

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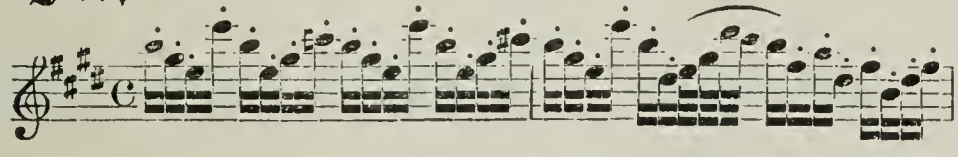

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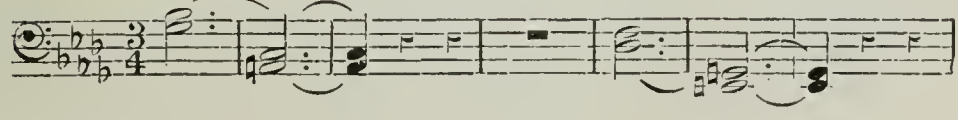

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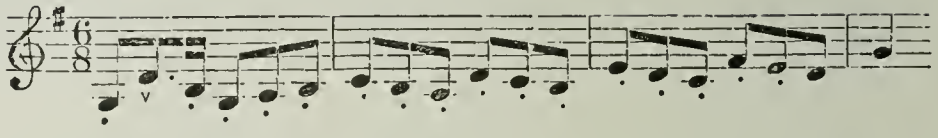

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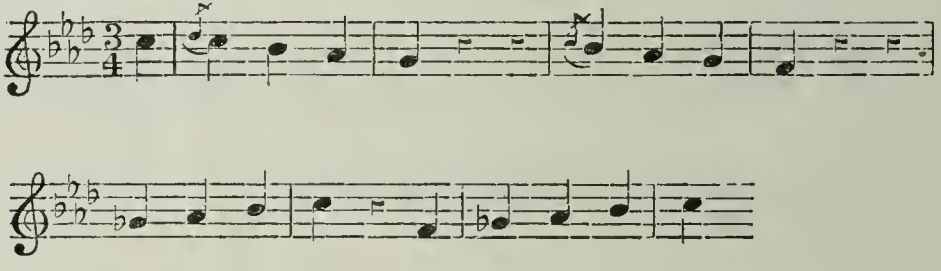

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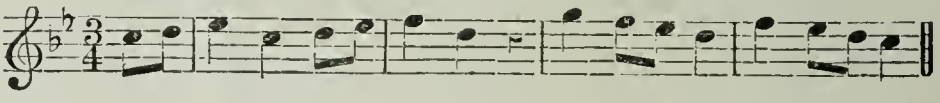

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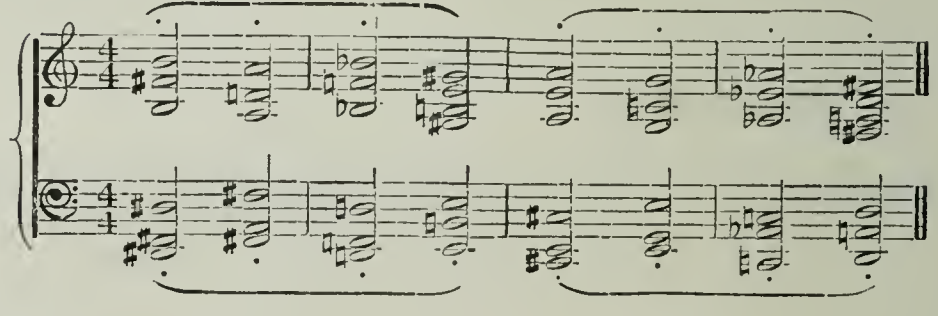

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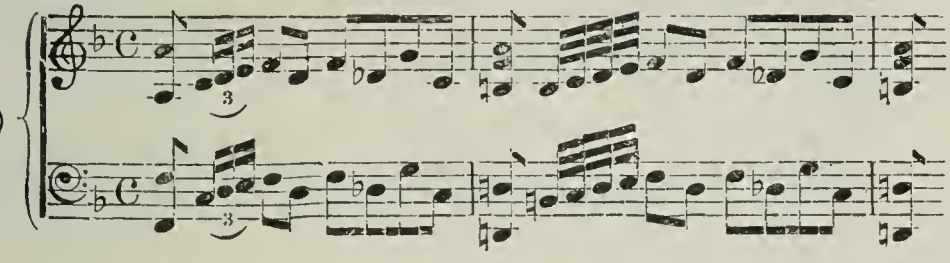

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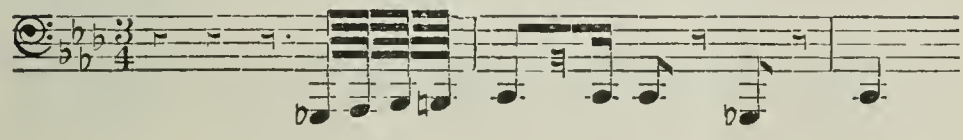

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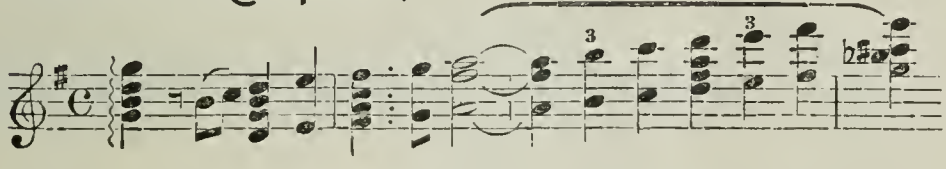

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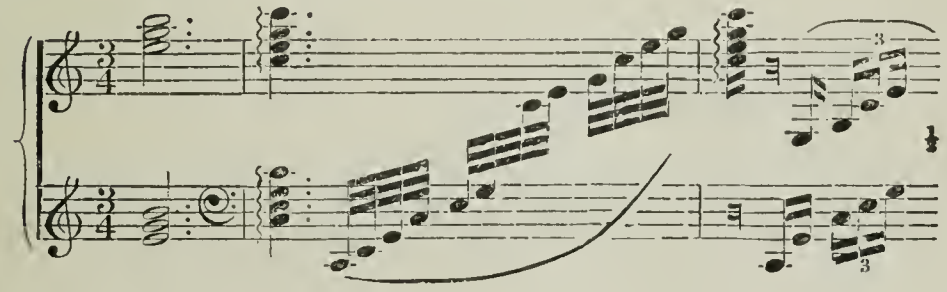

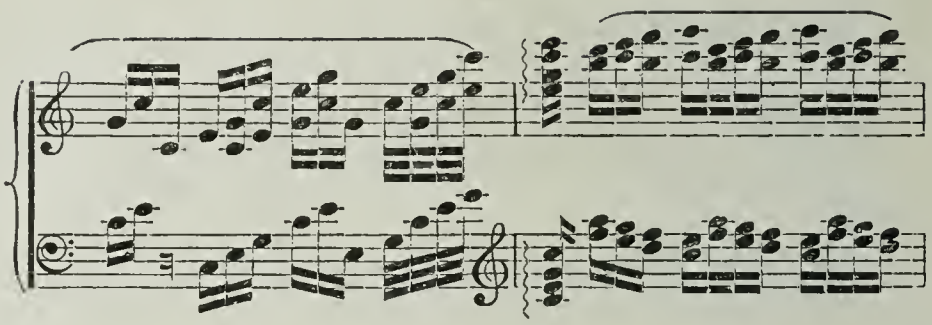

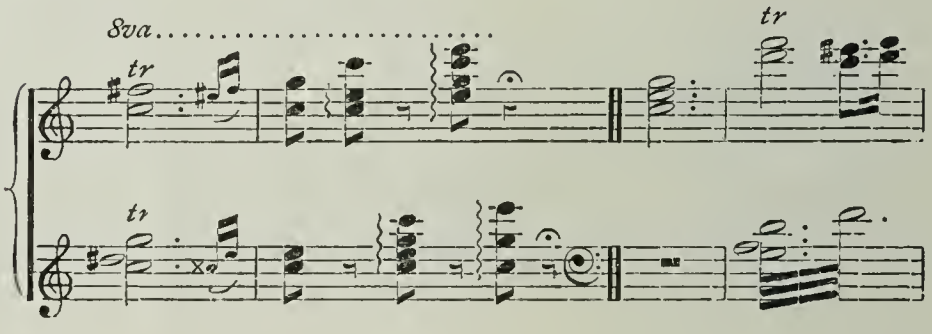

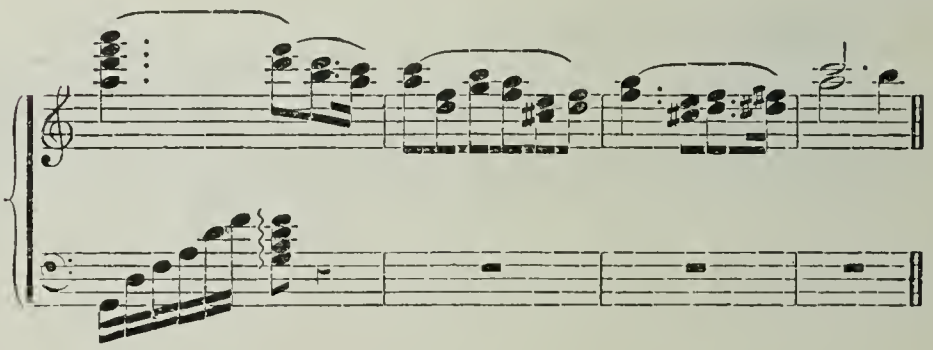

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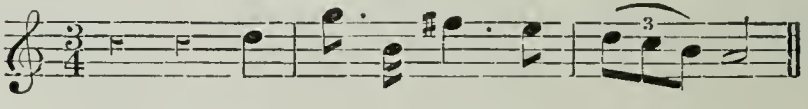
(52) 

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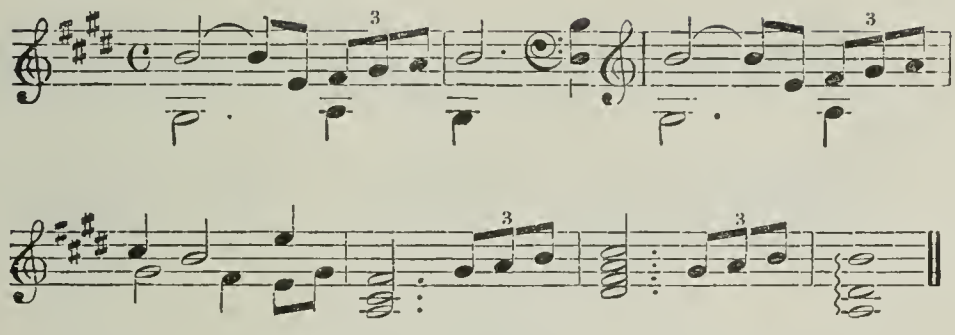
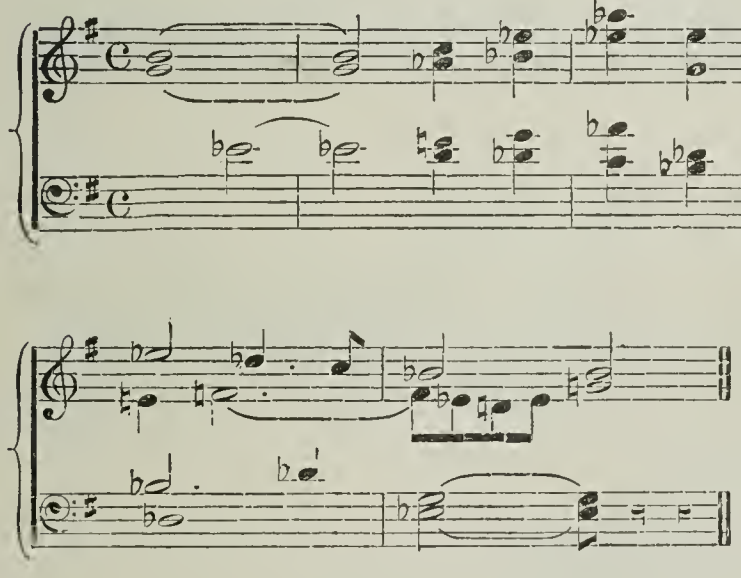


"Siegfried, the World's Treasure."

(54)



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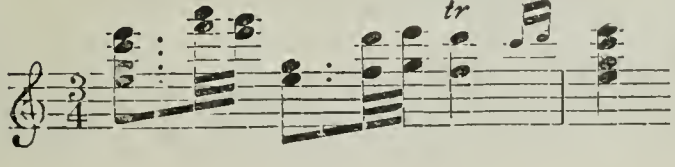

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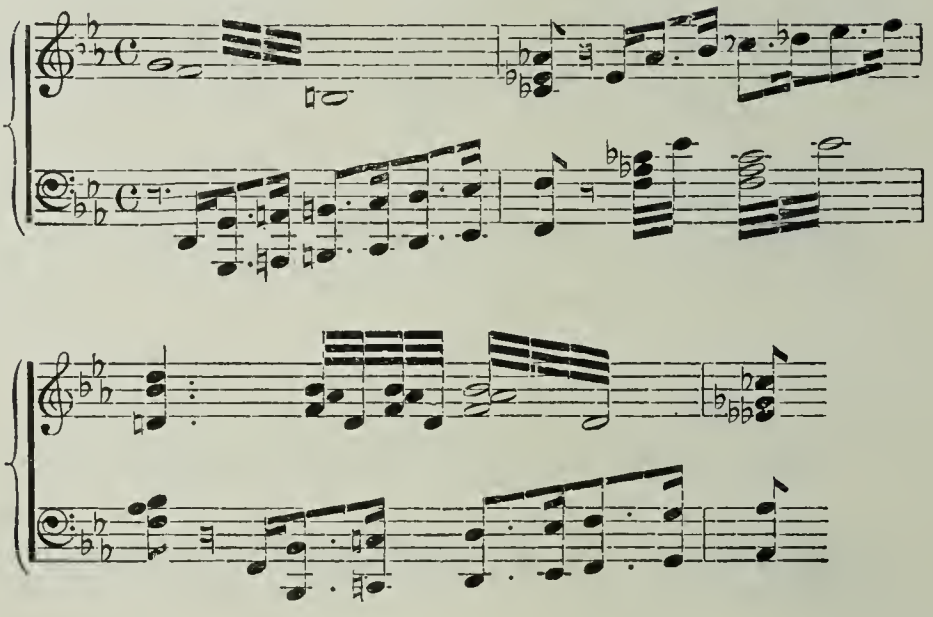

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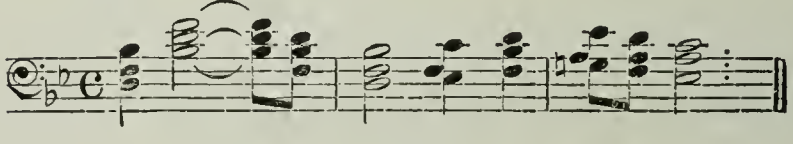

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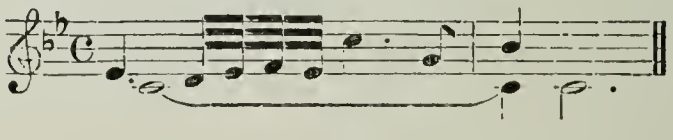

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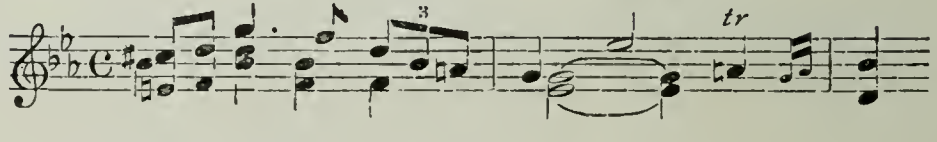

The Gibichung.

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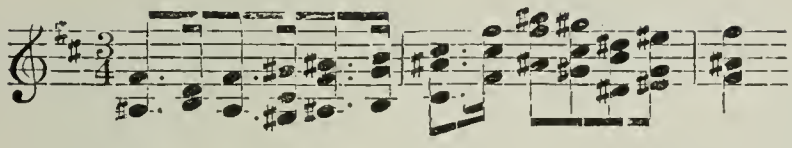

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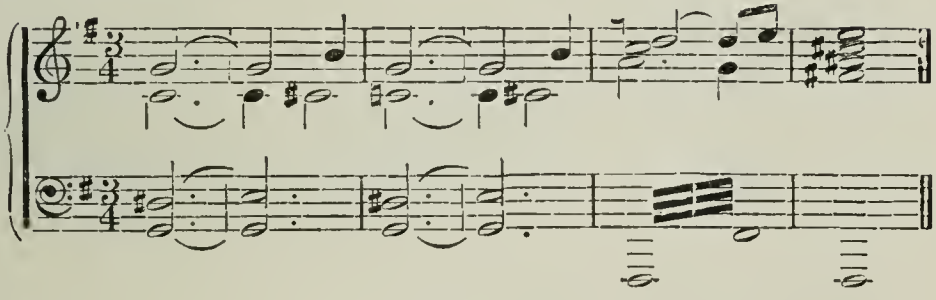

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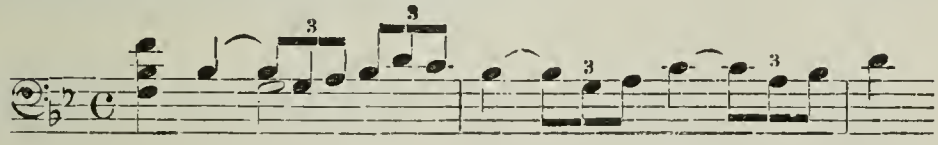

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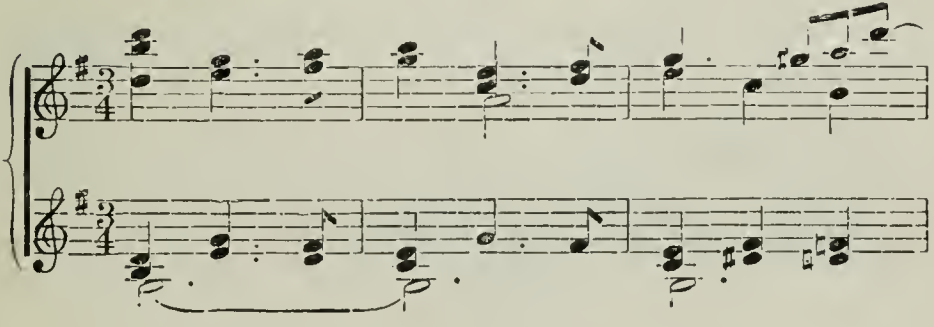

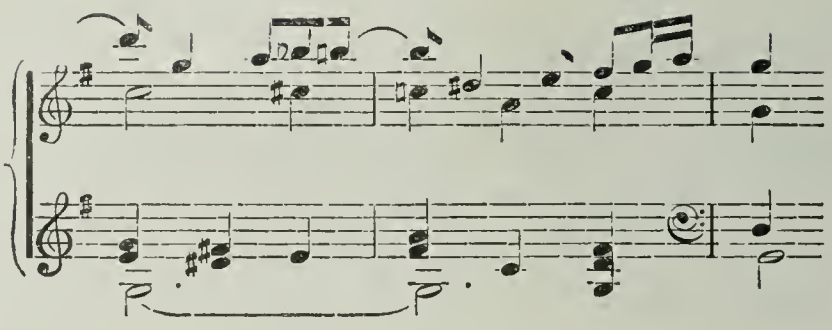

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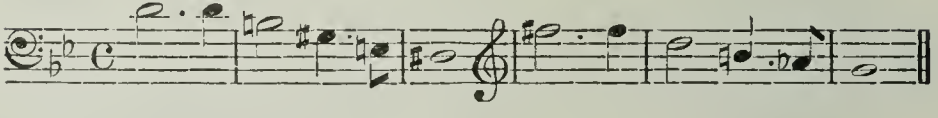

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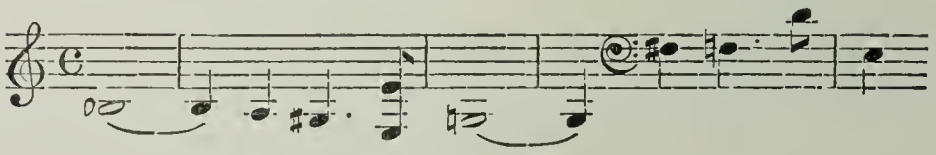

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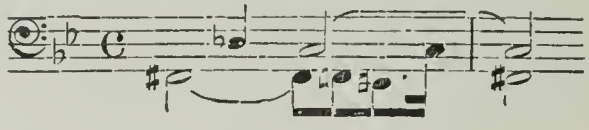

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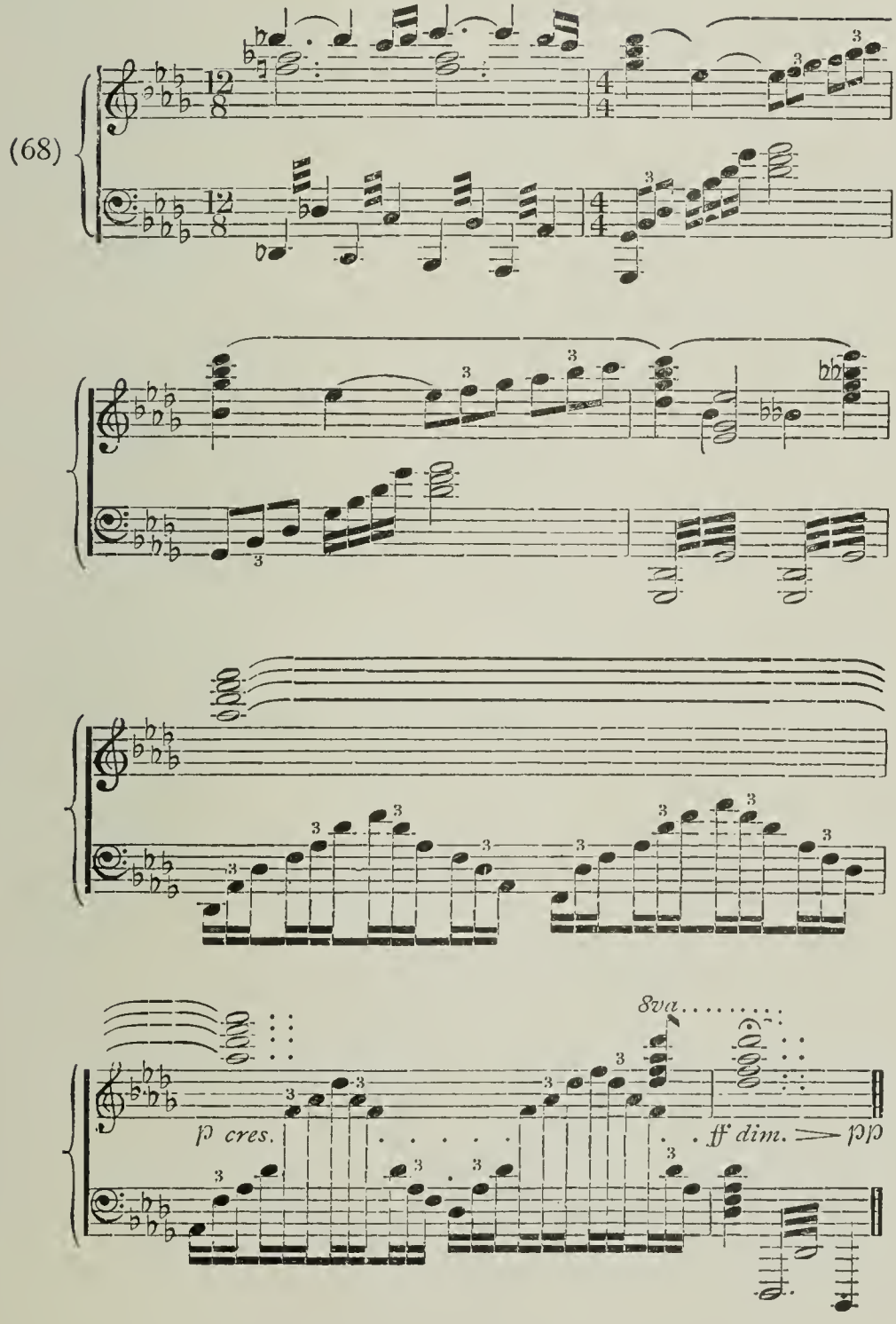

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